# The Politics of Self-Expression

The Urdu middle-class milieu in mid-twentieth century India and Pakistan

Markus Daechsel

# THE POLITICS OF SELF-EXPRESSION

Middle-class political culture in interwar North India was haunted by fascistic resonances. Activists from various political camps believed in forms of Social-Darwinism, worshipped violence and war and focused their political action on public spectacles and paramilitary organization. This book argues that these features were part of a larger political culture – the politics of self-expression – that had lost sight of society as the normal space in which politics was to be conducted. Instead, there was an emphasis on the inner worlds of individuals who increasingly came to understand politics as an avenue to personal salvation. It proposes that this re-orientation of politics was the result of social transformations brought about by the coming of a consumer society. The politics of self-expression was fixated with matters related to political choices, the branding of clothes and bodies and the use of a political language that closely resembled advertising discourse. This study traces the socio-genesis of this new form of politics through a detailed analysis of material culture in the Urdu middle-class milieu. It examines how middle-class people arrived at their political opinions in consequence of how they structured their immediate spatial surroundings, and how they strove to define the experiences of their own bodies in a particularly middle-class way. The scope and arguments of this book make an innovative contribution to the historiography of modern South Asia.

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FOR PAPI, MAMI, JUSTI AND AASHI

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# PREFACE

This book is a very substantial revision – over large parts a complete rewrite – of my 2001 doctoral dissertation on middle-class political culture in Lahore. Not all empirical material presented in the dissertation has found a place in this book, and some new evidence – particularly about Hindu aspects of Urdu culture – has been added. The overall argument of my thesis has not been fundamentally changed, but it has been considerably tightened up and cleansed of unnecessary distractions.

This book suggests that the political culture in the Urdu middle-class milieu of mid-twentieth-century South Asia had a distinct character that sets it apart both from a politics of material interests and nationalism as conventionally understood. This new orientation of politics, it is argued, was the product of complex processes of transformation that fit into the wider problematic of an emerging consumer society. My main aim has been to sketch the broad outline of this argument as clearly as possible in order to clear the ground for more detailed empirical studies in the future. The subject matter at hand is not one that can be 'dealt with' in a single definitive study or with reference to a definitive body of source material. All aspects of middle-class life – from the small acts of everyday life to literature, politics and the arts – are potentially of relevance. I expect to revisit several of these areas as part of my future research agenda, and would look forward to similar endeavours by other students of South Asian history. For the time being, all I wish to do is to get the ball rolling.

This study has a clear political stance. I believe that the politics of self-expression has done considerable harm to the people of South Asia. This is in part a reflection of the dire events that accompanied the writing of this book. Between 1997 and the present day we have witnessed the nuclearization of South Asia, the rise of Hindu nationalism, the pogrom of Gujarat, the transformation of sections of political Islam into a media-obsessed cult of terrorism and, last but by no means least, the consolidation of a new and pernicious form of Imperialism. This has given many aspects of political culture earlier in the twentieth century a terrible sense of foreboding. My German upbringing has also had an impact on my interpretation of events. I find it much more difficult than writers from the Anglo-Saxon world, or from South Asia itself, to shrug off the presence of fascistic

resonances as unimportant matters of the interwar zeitgeist. As this book offers a fairly 'closed' form of critique, it may be useful to emphasize that I do believe that there are better alternatives to self-expressionism. Any form of political action would fit the bill: that which takes concrete social matters seriously; that which places concerns for the community or society above those of the individual and that which attempts to change the world for the better at that level. Many men and women are engaged in such activity – for instance, in leftwing grass-root mobilization, in trade unions, environmentalist campaigns and NGOs. Further away from my own political instincts, but no less relevant, are new and old forms of political Islam that keep their eyes firmly on a reordering of society and stay clear of the grandiloquence of the likes of al-Qaʿida.

This book would not have been possible without the practical help and the intellectual input of a great number of people of whom I can only mention a small selection here.

My first thanks go to my doctoral supervisor Francis Robinson, who left me the space I needed to develop my own arguments, but who nevertheless contributed with a number of gentle but important directives to the way my research was going. Special thanks also go to Avril Powell, who awakened my interest in South Asian history when teaching me as a graduate student and who has lent her invaluable support to my work ever since, and – rather belatedly – to Thomas Philipp who had a decisive influence on my academic development during my Magister years at the University of Erlangen, Germany. For intellectual stimulation and mammoth discussion sessions – Calcutta Coffee House style – I am indebted to my friends present and past: Rajarshi Dasgupta, Yasmin Khan (both of whom read parts of my draft), Debraj Battacharya, Benjamin Zakariah, Sulagna Roy, Rakesh Pandey (who commented on separate chapters of the original PhD), Ravi Ahuja (in times long bygone) and Jeffrey Diamond. I would also like to thank my new colleagues at Edinburgh, particularly Crispin Bates and my predecessor in office, Ian Duffield, for keeping things in perspective.

I am deeply grateful for the love, hospitality and unrelenting support that I received from the Khalid clan, especially Brig. Usman Khalid, who has helped me to develop a feel for Lahore and who opened many doors in the city. My gratitude and respect for him is more important than our differences of opinion on many matters raised in this book. In Islamabad I enjoyed the hospitality, stimulating discussions and practical help of Dr Kaniz Yusuf, one of the few truly intellectual Muslim Leaguers alive who have been directly involved in the events of 1947. When researching in India and Pakistan I received a special sense of warmth and closeness from members of the socialist movement on either side of the border, but especially from Sohail Hashmi in New Delhi. I am greatly indebted to them all, although they too may disagree with some of my conclusions. I greatly appreciate the readiness of a number of persons to be interviewed. Their names are available in the references.

Research would have been impossible without the assistance of the staff of numerous archives and libraries. Especially friendly were my 'helpers' at the National Archives of Pakistan, the National Archives of India, at the Oriental and India Office Collection of the British Library (a big thanks is due to Leena Mitford), at the United States National Archives in College Park, Maryland, at the Sundarayya Vignana Kendram in Hyderabad and at the Shirkat Gah library, Lahore. During the course of my research I benefited from financial support from the Arts and Humanities Research Board (now AHRC), travel funding from the Royal Historical Society, a College Studentship at Royal Holloway, University of London and an Isobel Thornley Studentship at the Institute of Historical Research, University of London. I am also deeply grateful to my editors at Routledge and to the Royal Asiatic Society who very kindly agreed to include this book in their series of publications.

The biggest thanks of all go first to my mother and father who have awakened my interest in all things 'Oriental' by giving me unique opportunities of independent travel from my early teens onwards, and second to Umbreen, who not only put up with my sloppiness and absentmindedness, but made sure that the practical aspects of this book remained firmly under control.

The responsibility for errors and omissions is entirely my own.

Edinburgh
14 August 2005

# NOTE ON TRANSLITERATION

Urdu is an Indo-Germanic language with a large component of loan words from Arabic, Persian and Turkish. There are a number of letters and sounds that do not exist in English and that are difficult to represent in the Roman script. Scholarly conventions require the use of a transliteration system with a set of additional diacritics and macrons that make the Roman script pliable to represent an 'Oriental' language in a linguistically correct form. To a certain extent, this requirement is a hangover from the past, when philology was believed to be the key academic discipline to deal with non-European cultures and religions. A book that sees its contribution in the fields of history, politics and social theory – and emphatically not in philology or language scholarship – can perhaps do without some of the more arcane aspects of the transliteration system. This would remove the sense of distancing that the use of unfamiliar signs invariably invokes in the non-specialist reader. But some scientific rigour is nevertheless necessary, particularly when it comes to the identification of sources.

This book has sought to strike a compromise between the requirement of accessibility and philological conventions that is heavily biased in favour of the former. The following points apply:

Transliteration is only used in the footnotes, not in the main text. On the occasion when direct citations from the Urdu occur in the text, I have used a form of spelling that relies on the transliteration system used in the footnotes, but without any additional diacritical marks. Wherever applicable, English words used in Urdu have been re-anglicized in the main text. The newspaper 'Wīklī Tēj', for instance, appears in this form in the footnotes, but as 'Weekly Tej' in the main text. Attempts at further Anglicization, for instance by the use of 'ee' for a long 'ī', or 'oo' for a long 'ū' have been avoided.

Place and personal names have been used, as far as possible, in the forms that have become conventional. Authors who write in both Urdu and English often transcribe their own names in English in unusual ways, and wherever applicable this spelling has been maintained.

The transliteration system used in the footnotes follows the conventions of the *Ferozson's Urdu–English Dictionary* and is based on two considerations: it follows the natural use of the English language as far as possible, and it should

enable the reader to reconstruct exactly how a word is spelt in the original Urdu. Linguistic considerations such as using a certain type of diacritic for one particular family of phonems have been ignored.

Details are as follows:

| | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| ا | As a consonant between two vowels ‘, otherwise ‘ā’ | | | | | | | | |
| ب | b | پ | p | ت | t | ٹ | ṭ | ث | s̱ |
| ج | j | چ | ch | ح | h | خ | kh | | |
| د | d | ڈ | ḍ | ذ | z̲ | | | | |
| ر | r | ڑ | ṛ | ز | z | ژ | zh | | |
| س | s | ش | sh | | | | | | |
| ص | s | ض | z̤ | | | | | | |
| ط | t̲ | ظ | z̤̲ | | | | | | |
| ع | c | غ | gh (guttural r) | | | | | | |
| ف | f | ق | q (guttural k) | | | | | | |
| ک | k | گ | g | | | | | | |
| ل | l | | | | | | | | |
| م | m | | | | | | | | |
| ن | n | ں | n (nasalization of the preceding vowel) | | | | | | |
| و | as a consonant ‘w’, as a vowel ‘ū’ or ‘o’ | | | | | | | | |
| ہ | h, silent at the end of a word | | | | | | | | |
| ی | as a consonant y, as a vowel ‘ī’, ‘ē’ or ‘ai’ | | | | | | | | |

# INTRODUCTION

The 'politics of self-expression' designates a political culture that came to prominence in South Asian middle-class circles between the 1930s and the 1950s. It contained a range of extremist nationalist discourses that often pertained to oppose each other, but really bore a great deal of what Wittgenstein has called 'family resemblances'.[1] The unifying element was a certain way of understanding and doing politics that denied the social and political nature of humanity. Political activists assumed that the world was made up of inward-looking and self-contained subjects – individuals and nations – whose sole purpose was the self-expression of their inner essences under circumstances of extreme crisis. The stuff of everyday life – how people cooperate and struggle with each other, how they exchange goods and values, how they exercise and resist power – was either entirely ignored or denounced as petty and distractive. This basic orientation gave rise to shared rhetorical devices, patterns of argument, styles of articulation, types of organization and modes of action. There was a valorization of war and violence, a celebration of boundary experiences and political spectacles, an obsession with paramilitary activity and open sympathy for European fascism and nazism. The prevailing political idiom could be bone chilling. Salvation was to be found 'under the stern law of nature' and on the 'the anvil of war', since 'those alone who can stand this fierce ordeal will prove [the] fitness (…) that entitles races and types to survive in this world'.[2] According to another speaker – and, as it happens, one strongly hostile to the first – only 'a community of people which carries action (…) to the very extremist limits has every right to remain a predominant race on this Earth forever'.[3] Others joined the fascistic chorus by arguing that democracy was a curse, that it softened people through its commitment to non-violence and that only a 'dictatorship' and military organization was capable of securing a group's survival in history.[4]

The mainstream historiography has often acknowledged but rarely seen a need to discuss this unsettling political culture. One of the problems is perhaps that it is difficult to quarantine the politics of self-expression. Fascistic flirtations of this kind existed in most political movements of the late colonial period, but usually without entirely taking over their overall character. Most strongly affected was an assortment of new-style Islamic radicals and Hindu supremacists, but there were

also significant reverberations in the mainstream nationalisms of the Congress and the Muslim League, as well as in some sections of the political Left. This spectral omnipresence has made the politics of self-expression largely irrelevant for political or historiographical polemics; clashes between 'left' and 'right', between 'communalism' and 'secularism' and between a 'Pakistani' and an 'Indian' nation have completely overshadowed the importance of a troublesome but largely shared political culture. It has become easy to shrug off the politics of self-expression as a product of the *zeitgeist* of the 1930s and 1940s, which is then filtered out of the historical imagination like some form of background hiss that must not detract from the considerable achievements of ideologically more complex leaders such as M.K. Gandhi, Jawaharlal Nehru or M.A. Jinnah.

It does not help that similar phenomena elsewhere have often been relegated in similar ways. The dark cloud of fascism did not only overshadow the freedom struggles of India and Pakistan but nationalist movements the world over, from Latin America and China to the Middle East.[5] There are various lines of explaining the non-European enthusiasm for militarist self-expressionism, few of which are really willing to engage with the issue as a specific problem. According to the commonsense line, the selection of Italy and Germany as ideological role models is easily explained with the maxim that 'my enemy's enemy is my friend' – an argument that will always hold some water in the case of colonized peoples seeking freedom from British or French domination. For others, fascistic resonances were nothing more than adding a bit of rhetorical gloss to relatively mainstream concerns of nation building under colonial or post-colonial conditions. Benedict Anderson, for instance, was initially shocked to hear the Indonesian 'leftwing' nationalist Sukarno praise Adolf Hitler; but he learnt to overcome his unease by interpreting such dedications as the result of a strange distortion of political vision, as if one was looking 'through the wrong end of a telescope'.[6] The conclusions reached by many historians of European fascism support such evasive manoeuvres. They point out – often on the basis of tautological thinking – that 'proper' fascism can only really exist in its original setting; in the most restrictive interpretation this is Italy itself, according to a wider view all of industrial Europe, but emphatically not the colonial or post-colonial world.[7]

This book reverses the natural order of things by foregrounding and amplifying the background hiss of a problematic political culture whilst relegating the more familiar narratives of successful nation-state creation in South Asia to the background. Despite obvious and important cross-connections, we have to pitch our argument on a terrain beyond the well-trodden paths of nationalism or fascism studies. As we shall see in due course, the political culture of self-expression was about more than the appropriation of radical political discourses and styles with social-Darwinist or fascistic undertones; and it was more specific than the general question of how collective political identities should be ordered under conditions of modernity. Contrary to its often strongly collectivist language and disavowal of 'individualism', self-expressionism remained centrally concerned with *personal salvation*, which is precisely why it was so blind or dismissive towards a politics

predicated on 'society' as the web of connections that bind human beings together. The central question of this book is how such a reversal of priorities could be seen as both natural and convincing. The mode of enquiry follows a tradition of the 'sociology of knowledge' in which certain ways of making sense of the world are explained with reference to the cultural and material circumstances of social groups. This takes us into the everyday world of the middle-class milieu of North India: their reading habits and circumstances of accommodation, their sense of wellbeing and disease and, most importantly, into the commodity culture that they encountered in their life worlds.

## Beyond fascism and nationalism

The question of a nationalist political culture with family resemblances to fascism disappears in the gap between two distinct registers of interpretation – the study of specific ideological traditions from the perspective of intellectual history and the study of nationalism as a meta-sociological formation. In order to come truly into its own, the subject matter of this book has to be positioned within an alternative problematic of investigation. This is why the term 'the politics of self-expression' was introduced, and why this book seeks to avoid using the terms 'fascism' and 'nationalism' or their derivatives. As the following exercise in ground clearing will demonstrate, the problematic of self-expressionism, as understood by this book, was both more general and more specific than the subjects of fascism and nationalism.

Most recent studies of fascism fall into the category of intellectual history. Attempts to explain fascism as a general phenomenon rooted in certain socio-economic developments have become discredited over the years. The Soviet–Marxist doctrine of fascism as the defensive posture of capitalism in crisis, for instance, failed to convince because it ended up giving interwar social democracy an equivalent place in analysis as the murderers of Auschwitz.[8] In a wider context, no connection between class politics and fascism or nazism has been firmly established; it seems impossible to reduce the phenomenon to a modernizing ideology of a new middle class, for example, or to the backlash against modernity by a petit bourgeois clientele.[9] This leaves little ground to deal with fascism as a structural package that could be applied to case studies outside the original remit of the term.

In recognition of such difficulties, the majority of scholars of European fascism have embarked on a search for specific historical causes and for specific intellectual genealogies.[10] This is why it is so easy to dismiss the possibility of fascism in the colonial world. When Congress politicians, Muslim Leaguers or an assortment of other radicals attempted to sound like Mussolini or Hitler they could never do so with sufficient authenticity to count as the 'real thing'. Being external to the circumstances in which original fascism arose, South Asians can only be seen to 'borrow' a political idiom without partaking in its original historical importance and meaning. It may still be interesting to investigate how Indians

came to know about Hitler, Mussolini and related ideologues,[11] but the distinction between an original and a derivative discourse immediately suggests that this is not an enquiry of true historical importance; we are back to the aforementioned 'wrong end of telescope' line of dismissing the subject.

There is a more general problem here. To approach the politics of self-expression from the perspective of the intellectual history of fascism entails an over-emphasis on discourse. Intellectual history is about how arguments were received, adapted and reconstructed. The actual ideological content of self-expressionism was only of secondary importance, however. This is precisely why so many different shades of opinion could take up a fascistic language without falling into opposing political camps over this issue; if discourse really mattered, we would find a clear polarization between fascists and non-fascists. As will be pointed out in some detail over the course of this book, the centre of the political culture of self-expression was not a particular discourse but a certain *mode* of doing politics associated with a certain stylistic repertoire. To borrow from the terminology of literary criticism, the focus of analysis has to shift from 'content' to 'form'. This requires a turn from a history of ideas to a more general and sociological orientation of analysis.

A much wider field of enquiry, within which the politics of self-expression could be situated, is the study of nationalism. There are obvious and immediate lines of connection. Anthony D. Smith has identified 'the *expression* of national *character and individuality*' as one of the three definitive traits of nationalism[12] – an overlap in terminology that suggests considerable overlap in the field of social theory. As the following passages will demonstrate, there is plenty in the historiography of nationalism that is useful for arguments about a 'politics of self-expression'. But as was the case with the discourse about fascism, nationalism studies are ultimately incapable of positing the subject area of this book with sufficient sharpness.

A particularly strong resonance between nationalism and the politics of self-expression comes to the fore in Elie Kedourie's reading of nationalism as a pathological ideology that grew out of romantic individualism at the beginning of the nineteenth century.[13] Speaking as an ultra-conservative and as an advocate of enlightened Empire, Kedourie believed that most if not all forms of nationalism had a tendency to violence, bloodthirsty rhetoric and a reductionist understanding of the nature of identity and politics. Nationalism was never a part of 'real' politics, but rather 'a golden key which gave entrance to fabled realms' of personal liberation; it was a doctrine that erased the distinction between the political and the private, 'its sole object [being] an inner world and its end [being] the abolition of all politics.'[14] It is doubtful that this description is a fair account of the manifold ways in which men and women around the globe have related to nationalism since the days of Fichte and Kant; but it has to be said that Kedourie's description hits the spot when it comes to the kind of self-expressionist political culture that forms the subject of this book. As we shall see, there was indeed a strong tendency to use politics as a means of personal salvation – as a 'golden

key' to a better universe – which went hand in hand with a corruption of politics as conventionally understood. Kedourie's usefulness for situating the subject matter of self-expressionism is confined to providing inspirations at the descriptive level, however. Since all nationalism amounts to self-expressionism in his eyes, there is little scope to posit the problem of a politics of self-expression in the Urdu middle-class milieu of mid-twentieth-century South Asia as a specific topic of enquiry. Moreover, Kedourie was never really able to explain *why* a political pathology born in the specific context of early nineteenth-century Germany should become an all-pervasive force around the world. His account is somewhat akin to the biblical story of the Fall of Man: because somebody somewhere gave in to the temptation of a destructive idea, this idea continues to wreak havoc on the course of history. In the final analysis, this idealist approach is as unhelpful for the present investigation as the kind of intellectual genealogy mentioned in the context of fascism: one is able to trace connections, but one cannot explain why they exist or what they mean.

Much better placed to tackle questions of causality – but no less troublesome – are studies of nationalism that think on the canvas of meta-sociology. The need for a nation and a nation-state has been interpreted as the fundamental principle of political organization in the modern world. In the well-known formulations of Benedict Anderson or Ernest Gellner, nationalism is not a specific ideology but a sociological fact, of the same analytical order as religion.[15] Nationalism appears as the more or less necessary product of a range of large-scale processes of transformation such as industrialization, print-capitalism, the rise of compulsory education, the establishment of universal rights and the principles of individuality and self-determination. As Partha Chatterjee has pointed out, such an approach forces nationalisms in the non-Western world into a distinction between a historically inevitable form of 'good' nationalism, and pathological forms of 'bad' nationalism that can be explained as the temporary malfunctioning of some aspect of the development process.[16] The prevalence of a nationalist political culture full of fascistic flirtations, as opposed to a 'mature' democratic nationalism, could then be rationalized with reference to an insufficient degree of nationalist mobilization, an authoritarian political culture, the prevalence of illiteracy, the absence of 'civil society' institutions or the weakness of a class that could act as the carrier of modernization.

There are a number of problems with such a way of arguing. In the first instance, it plays into the hands of those who would like to dismiss the presence of a troublesome and radical political culture in the late colonial era as a transient and ultimately unimportant phenomenon. There is no point, after all, to engage too closely with the ideological foibles of some fascistic nationalists if the 'mainstream' nationalism of a Nehru, Jinnah or Gandhi headed into the right direction as decreed by historical necessity. A second and related problem is the postulation of a direct and necessary connection between nationalist politics and state politics. This is explicit in Gellner's definition of nationalism and strongly implied in Anderson's preoccupation with sovereignty.[17] Such an emphasis

precludes any possibility to think about nationalist political culture as anything other than the instrumentalist quest for political power, which is fulfilled in the establishment of an independent national polity. The questions of identity and of personal liberation that Kedourie was so adamant about, are right from the start rationalized out of existence. Within the framework of meta-sociological theories of nationalism, in other words, the very problematic of a 'politics of self-expression' has no place.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, questions need to be asked about the grand narrative of modernization that underpins the explanation of nationalism as part of large-scale processes of transformation. Indian 'post-colonial' authors such as Ashis Nandy[18], Partha Chatterjee, Gyan Prakash and Sudipta Kaviraj have all argued that this narrative was part and parcel of the larger project of colonial subjugation. In the eyes of Prakash, the kind of analysis of nationalism proposed by Gellner and Anderson amounts to no less than a discursive replication of the injustices of the British Empire.[19] Others have been more careful to think about the imposed nature of a grand narrative of modernization in a way that acknowledges its factual inevitability. Modernization was the product of colonial rule, but Indians could not simply shrug it off; they had to engage with it and create a sense of political identity that allowed them to be simultaneously 'modern' and 'themselves'. Such ways of arguing have led to two important conclusions: first, that the question of nationalism was not only one of state-creation, but also one of culture and selfhood; second, that no process of modernization or development could ever iron out the basic contradiction thrown up by the fact that 'modernity' was always also an experience of subjugation.

For Kaviraj, writing about Bengal, the colonized consciousness could for a long time only be an 'unhappy' or a 'self-ironic' one, with some form of temporary respite found by engaging in leftwing radicalism from the 1930s onwards.[20] This is an important finding that resonates with the politics of self-expression. As this book will argue, members of the Urdu middle-class milieu were similarly attempting to overcome some form of identity crisis by fleeing into a particularly radicalized form of political activity. Chatterjee's ideas about South Asian nationalism can be extended into a problematic of self-expression on a different route. He postulated the division of Indian identities into an 'outer' domain that engaged with colonial culture, and an untouched 'inner' domain that served as a reservoir of cultural authenticity.[21] This established an ontological hierarchy between a surface being that operates in terms of politics, engagement and adaptation, and some 'inner' essence that is true precisely because it relies only on itself. To think in terms of one's own 'culture' and a suppressor 'culture', or in terms of a collective interiority or authenticity, is already an abstraction that averts the view from concrete social relationships and enters an epistemological terrain populated by meta-historical and self-contained entities with some form of individuality. One need only assume further that the 'outer' adaptive and political layer of identity is no longer seen as a protector for the cherished 'inner' essence, but as something that contaminates its purity and inhibits its unfolding – and the

contours of a radical politics that seeks to liberate the 'inner' from the 'outer' through an espousal of war and violence emerge.

Post-colonial theories of nationalism are pointing the way for a construction of the politics of self-expression as a specific problem, but they are themselves unable to take the extra step required to get from nationalism in general to self-expressionism in particular. The kind of questions they ask revolve around the impact of the colonial presence. Once again, this allows a nationalist political culture with fascistic undertones only to be posited as a special or deviant case. Most, if not all, Indians were affected by the colonial impact and had to struggle with a problem of self-hood, but far fewer of them actually came to subscribe to the kind of politics of self-expression under investigation in this book. In order to truly account for our subject matter we have to find an explanatory framework that inverts the order of 'mainstream' and 'fringe' in such a way that the politics of self-expression appears as the former, and other more 'mainstream' forms of nationalism as the latter.

The crucial step towards a construction of the politics of self-expression as an autonomous subject takes us back to the grand narrative of modernization, as it was proposed by Gellner and Anderson, and problematized by post-colonial theory. This narrative sees modernization as a move towards rationalization. Weberians, Marxists and Foucauldians describe various aspects of this development in different ways, but they agree about the broad outlines: there is a secularization and 'a disenchantment' of the world; there is a move towards re-ordering every aspect of life according to an economic rationality of commodification and free contractual exchange; finally, there are new modes of controlling people by scientific power/knowledge through the rationalization of disciplinary regimes – exemplified by the nineteenth-century creation of the state school, the modern prison, the lunatic asylum and the clinic. The beginnings of this story are almost always located in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries and the definitive moments of arrival in the nineteenth and early twentieth.

What this story of modernization as rationalization misses out on, is the fact that all these developments were crucially dependent on a controlled expansion of *un-reason*. This is most clearly the case with capitalism. Despite the drive towards bringing all natural and human resources under its sway, the new economic order was never only about a 'protestant' ethics of self-control, hard work and frugality; it was also about the joys of *consuming*. Capitalism would never have worked otherwise. It did not only entail a shift from use to exchange value, but also a new and exuberant drive towards the appropriation of commodities as a form of self-fulfilment. Classical Marxism does not fully account for this un-economic and irrational element, although there are glimpses of recognition in Marx's ruminations about the commodity as 'fetish'.[22] If taken seriously, the problematic of consumption casts the entire grand narrative of modernization in a different, and decidedly less positive light. Let us provide a brief sketch of what this narrative means for the development of politics.

Although historians have come to trace the matter of modern consumerism as far back as the eighteenth century or earlier,[23] a definitive constellation of economics and culture appears to have come into place at the turn from the eighteenth to the nineteenth century. In a major intervention, Colin Campbell has suggested that a new ethics of romanticism – predicated on emotional introspection, a hunger for stimulation and arousal and a penchant for day-dreaming – helped to give birth to a consumer society that alone could sustain the onward march of capitalism.[24] It is highly significant that this was the very same time period in which Elie Kedourie located what he saw as the rise of the inherently irrational and self-indulgent doctrine of nationalism. The romantic consumer did not only change society, but also political culture. In *The Fall of Public Man*, Richard Sennett has told the continuation of this story within the context of nineteenth-century Europe.[25] As socio-economic structures were refashioned by high capitalism, social communication in general and politics in particular moved away from the idea that societal relations consisted in a set of *roles*. Instead, people developed an obsession with *identities*. This conceptual switch reduced a multiplicity of societal relationships to a unitary and inner essence, and replaced an impersonal acceptance of societal conventions with the need to cultivate personal authenticity. As a result – and contrary to the assumption of a theory of modernization as 'rationalization' – communication in a 'public sphere' ceased to function. Instead of engaging with arguments in their own right, the participants in social interaction wanted to know whether an opinion truly reflected the innermost nature of those who proposed them. This degeneration of politics was directly linked to the adoption of new forms of material life. Clothes changed from being costumes to being branded consumer goods, while the creation of new middle-class living spaces established new norms of privacy where the existence of an innermost essence beyond societal relationships could be posited.

The degeneration of politics in a mass society was observed with increasing worry by contemporary observers writing in the 1920s and 1930s, most important amongst them the founders of the Frankfurt School and their loose associates Walter Benjamin, Siegfried Kracauer and Karl Mannheim.[26] In anticipation of later theories of consumption, the commodification of everyday life was for the first time perceived as something that went beyond the high-capitalist analytical framework of Marxism. Mannheim's 'sociology of knowledge' was both part of the process of de-politicization and a self-reflective account of how it operated. In the climate of heightened ideological battle, he argued, no political utterance was taken at face value any longer. Any political idea could be dismissed as an ideological obfuscation of the social being of those who held it. This opened up a cycle of continuous introspection and self-criticism that undermined the possibility of saying anything political beyond an expression of one's own social identity.[27] All one was left with after stripping everything down to innermost social essences, was irreducible and un-negotiable difference; the very distinction between friend and foe that 'Nazism's legal consultant', Carl Schmitt, formulated into a new theory of the political around the same time.[28]

The transformation of politics into something like pure self-expressionism accelerated in the post-war era – in tandem with a growing recognition of an 'admass' or 'throw-away' society as a new social formation.[29] A focal point of self-expressionist politics was the student rebellion of 1968. Eric Hobsbawm – brought up in the orthodox Marxist conventions of the wartime era – noted about the new political demands that '[c]ontrary to first appearances, these (…) were public announcements of private feelings and desires, [according to the motto] "I take my desires for reality, because I believe in the reality of my desires." '[30] Participants or sympathetic observers of the movement had themselves begun to realize that their own revolutionary energies were effortlessly absorbed and thwarted by the new hyper-reality of consumption. As Jean Baudrillard wrote at the end of *The Consumer Society* (1970), politics itself had literally become consumed, merged into the frantic and never-ending 'white mass' of consumer capitalism.[31] The narrative of self-expressionist, consumptive politics continues to the present. Further theoretical landmarks are the rediscovery of 'a politics of recognition'[32] in the post-Marxian universe, and the remarkable revival of Carl Schmitt as a leading political theorist[33] in the 1990s. The latest extreme of self-centring was perhaps reached in 2005, when a bunch of ageing pop-stars could plausibly argue that the attendance of a free concert was a profound political act to end world poverty.[34]

This global narrative of consumption does not concentrate on the achievements of enlightenment, rationalist but perceives the staging posts of a progressive degeneration of politics as the most significant events of the overall plot. Modernization is not a movement towards democracy and the secular nation-state, but one towards identity-mania, essentialized conflict and a wholesale destruction of the political in an entirely privatized world. This is the grand narrative that gives meaning to the concept of 'the politics of self-expression', which can now be defined as the political culture of consumption in the specific historical setting of mid-twentieth-century South Asia. The overlap with fascism is not incidental, since fascism and national socialism appear as the radicalized forms of consumer politics in the European context at the same time. It is not the ideological kinship that matters for the present analysis, however, but an equivalent position within a larger explanatory framework. Nationalism appears at various points in the alternative narrative of modernization, but its problematic is not the same as that of a consumer politics. Not all nationalists were also self-expressionists, and not all self-expressionists have to be nationalists. The focus on consumer politics as a specific problem cannot be about political culture in the late colonial framework in general; consumer politics is by definition confined to those who actually consume. This narrows our exploration to one specific social constituency: as this book will demonstrate, it was only a 'middle-class milieu', which under the circumstances of socio-cultural development at the time can adequately be described as part of a 'consumer society', and hence as the social location of a politics of self-expression.

The larger aim of this book is to use a socio-genetic explanation of the politics of self-expression for critiquing both the political culture itself, as well as the

social realities that helped to bring it about. By uncovering that certain political beliefs were rooted in a particular class culture, we can deflate some of the self-importance assumed by political activists out to save the world. As we shall see over the course of this book, this procedure is a particularly sharp weapon against the politics of self-expression, where there was a painful mismatch between the deadly seriousness and hubris of political consciousness and the mundane circumstances of its socio-genesis. But more importantly, perhaps, the critical momentum also works in the opposite direction. Most observers will find the kind of fascistic flirtations, which self-expressionist activists commonly indulged in, morally problematic. If one can suggest that the new political culture stands in some form of a causal relationship with certain societal processes and constituencies, then a readiness to question, and where necessary to condemn, will be extended to the latter also.

This mode of arguing follows in the footsteps of Karl Mannheim's aforementioned 'sociology of knowledge'; a move to both understand and critique a certain political ideology by uncovering its roots in social being. This is not a simple restatement of the old base-superstructure model that has largely and deservedly been rejected in most Marxian circles. Mannheim suggests a relatively lose and dynamic connection between social consciousness and social being, not a one-way street of determination. Most importantly, he was well aware that the connection is never simply 'out there', to be discovered by some form of positivist scientific enquiry; the political will of the observer, acting as part of a larger societal dialectic, is always already part of the equation.[35] It is in this spirit that this book pursues its subject with open political convictions. This is not an exercise in disinterested history '*sine ira et studio*' as classical authors put it, but the kind of history driven by *ressentiment* that Friedrich Nietzsche has regarded as the only history really worth doing.[36] The fact that Mannheim's sociology of knowledge was in itself connected to the larger social processes behind the politics of self-expression, cannot and should not be resolved. In the final instance, this book has to acknowledge that it is an *internal* critique of the politics of self-expression, and deserves to be subjected to the same treatment that it metes out on its target.

## Approaching the Urdu middle-class milieu

The social constituency that socially 'bound' the politics of self-expression was the 'Urdu middle-class milieu'. Each word in this designation requires some preliminary explanation. 'The middle class' is amongst the most over-used and problematic concepts in the vocabulary of meta-sociology. The liberal grand narrative of modernization required a sociological location of agency that would enact all the great transformations that history was thought to hold in store. This burden was placed in the shoulders of 'the middle class'. The revolutions of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries have been interpreted as bringing to power a new social constituency that possessed the potential for future dominance, but was hemmed in by the power of a feudal elite. Following the conventions of

a particularly British political discourse of the time period,[37] this group of people was associated with a 'middling' position because it stood lower in the established social hierarchy than the aristocracy, but also way above the labouring proletariat. The 'middle class' in this sense was always ambiguous in terms of sociological description, but defined by its role of a ruling class in waiting. The term could be made exclusive and semi-elitist, as in current British usage, or all-inclusive and demotic, as in US political diction.

In the development sociology of poor countries, 'the middle class' has often been used in this historically strong, but sociologically weak sense. For the first generation of post-war authors writing on Indian nationalism, for instance, it was a 'middle class' that received much of the credit for the successful freedom struggle. The availability of Western education and professional employment opportunities under the *Raj* – it was argued – had nurtured a class of nationalists who had the resources to turn the tables on their erstwhile masters.[38] Celebrations of the middle class also dominated the analysis of the post-colonial present and sustained great hopes for the future. The espousal of scientific knowledge, a close familiarity with the ways of the world and a willingness to confront the power of the old elites while restraining the unpredictable activism of the proletariat, recommended the middle class as a harbinger of development. The middle class was progress personified; and even where it was impossible to find strong middle-class structures on the ground, commentators were eager to detect them elsewhere, even if this took them into social constituencies that were strikingly different from the 'liberal' middle class envisioned by the modernization narrative. A 'middle-class' ascendancy was approved, even where its political dominance could only be secured by autocratic means, as was thought to be the case under various 'benevolent' military dictatorships in South Asia and elsewhere.[39]

None of these assumptions was ever borne out by political reality, and a great deal of criticism was levelled against those who held them; but the belief in 'the middle class' proved as immune to criticism as the belief in 'progress' and modernization. The 1990s brought another wave of revival of social theories predicated on 'the middle class', now seen as the beneficiary of the increasing pace of globalization and the spread of a consumer culture. A new loud and Westernized constituency in the large cities of India has been turned into the 'great Indian middle class',[40] with great expectations amongst policy wonks being pinned on the future development of the country as a 'superpower of the twenty-first century'.

The celebration of 'the middle class' was not confined to the apologists of capital. There has also been a creeping adoption of the term or one of its equivalents into Marxist discourse. The classical Marxist term 'bourgeoisie' is much more precise than 'middle class' and also much less prone to be misused. Unlike the 'middle class', the 'bourgeoisie' is very clearly defined as an elite, not as a 'middling', constituency and can be clearly identified by its ownership of the means of production. In a historical context like colonial India, such a bourgeoisie proper was always relatively small, however, and Marxist commentators had to

extend the use of the terms to include social constituencies that were not really bourgeois in any sense at all. This problem mars the otherwise excellent study of late colonial Muslim politics by W.C. Smith, for instance, who ascribed 'bourgeois' interests to the All India Muslim League, but was really thinking in terms of some form of middle class.[41] Other commentators have attempted to get round the problem by introducing new terms to denote politically powerful but neither clearly bourgeois nor feudal elites. Hamza Alavi's 'salariat' is an excellent case in point that establishes a revealing cross-connection to the 'new salaried middle class' of modernization theory.[42] As some form of a surrogate bourgeoisie, the salariat or the middle class in Marxist usage took on a similar meta-historical mission as its liberal equivalent, without ever possessing any clear relationship to the means of production.[43]

This book does not use 'middle class' in any such meta-sociological sense. In fact, it does not even accept the designation of 'class', but prefers the much less loaded term 'milieu'. A 'class' implies some form of unitary political consciousness, and brings with it the necessity of some precise a priori definition. Following E.P. Thompson's thoughts on this matter, this book operates on the assumption that 'class' is not a thing, but an effect – Thompson likened it to the steam and noise of a machine[44] – that only emerges at the intersection of historical processes. If and in what way the 'middle-class milieu' was indeed a 'middle class', is something that can only be established at the end of this book, not at the beginning.

Instead of providing any facile definitions of class, I would like to offer the reader a preliminary glimpse of who this book is all about by examining the range of source material where the working of 'class' will be observed. Following the example of other recent explorations of a North Indian middle class, this book concentrates on pamphlets, newspapers, tracts, magazines and books in order to uncover class formation as a cultural process.[45] The Urdu middle-class milieu – one could say by way of a first approximation – was a class of readers. This brings us straight to the last unexplained denominator in the term 'Urdu middle-class milieu', the matter of *Urdu*. Before we attempt a rough delimitation of our key constituency, a few words about language use are in order.

In the socio-historical context of this book, Urdu was primarily of importance as a written language that a large number of people used alongside spoken languages that may be dialectic variations of the lingua franca of North India – 'Hindustani' – or independent languages from the same family, such as Punjabi. The other great written language in the same geographic area is Hindi, which like Urdu represents a written version of spoken Hindustani. The main difference between the two languages is the script – a modified form of the Arabic script for Urdu and the Sanskrit-based Devanagari script for Hindi. Sharing both basic grammar and basic vocabulary, the two languages have moved into opposite cultural directions. Urdu was first and foremost a court language with strong links to the Islamicate tradition. It was culturally Muslim – incorporating many words and phrases from Arabic and Persian – but was used by the political and cultural

elites of varied religious backgrounds. Modern Hindi was a conscious reaction against the customary predominance of Urdu in particular, and of Muslim cultural norms in general. The emergence of Hindi as a major rival to Urdu was driven by the teaching and publishing efforts of Hindu urban professionals who were often on the payroll of urban bankers and tradesmen. Their efforts gained pace from the end of the nineteenth century onwards and led to what Francesca Orsini has called a 'Hindi public sphere' by the interwar period.[46]

Despite being a deliberately 'Hindu' language, the effect of Hindi on Hindu literate strata in North India was uneven. Even after the revival of Hindi, a sizeable number of Hindus – as well, of course, as almost all Muslims – continued to operate in Urdu, which in itself underwent a process of modernization with contributions from members of both religious communities. In the final analysis it was politics not religion that decided the geographic extent of a constituency of Urdu readers. The colonial government of the United Provinces of Agra and Awadh (UP) extended equal recognition to Hindi in 1900, which meant that Urdu became a minority language in the province. It was still used by Muslims, but by fewer and fewer Hindus. The only locations where Urdu still had a major role to play was the capital city of Lucknow, and smaller towns and cities in the Western part of the province, such as Aligarh, Meerut, Rampur and Bijnore where Muslims could constitute sizeable minorities or even majorities. The situation was markedly different in the neighbouring province of Punjab where no official recognition was afforded to Hindi. In consequence, Urdu continued to be the language of commerce, lower government and journalism for all religious communities until de-colonization. There were important differences in the gendered use of the language between religious communities, however. While it was widely read by both men and women amongst Muslims, Urdu remained largely confined to men amongst Hindus and Sikhs. Closely resembling Partha Chatterjee's division of identity into an inner and culturally 'pure' realm and an outside pragmatic realm,[47] women were encouraged to use forms of literacy that had religious significance – in this case the Sanskrit-based Hindi and Punjabi written in Gurmukhi script. The gender division of literacy could lead to amusing complications. The late Ravinder Kumar, scion of a Kashmiri Brahmin family of Lahore, recalled that he found it difficult to write love letters to his wife, as he could only read English and Urdu and she could read only Hindi.[48]

Although Urdu continued to play some role in print culture in many parts of India – including other language areas such as Bengal, Bombay and Madras – Punjab became the undisputed centre of Urdu publishing, and by extension of Urdu reading. The importance of UP and its capital Lucknow – often wrongly regarded as the unofficial centre of Urdu culture – suffered a decline over the early twentieth century. Table 1 provides an overview of the number of Urdu books published in India between 1928 and 1943. The drop in the final year was due to war shortages. Not only was the percentage of Urdu books within the total publication output much higher in Punjab than elsewhere, the province also boasted the largest total number – of which roughly one quarter was written or

*Table 1* The proportion of Urdu publications, 1928–43

| *Province* | *Year* | *Total publications* | *Total Urdu* | *% Urdu* |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| United provinces | 1928 | 3141 | 530 | 17 |
| | 1933 | 3538 | 424 | 12 |
| | 1938 | 2698 | 186 | 7 |
| | 1943 | 1004 | 112 | 11 |
| Punjab | 1928 | 1987 | 768 | 39 |
| | 1933 | 1942 | 930 | 48 |
| | 1938 | 2366 | 1138 | 48 |
| | 1943 | 996 | 592 | 59 |
| Delhi | 1928 | 387 | 248 | 64 |
| | 1933 | 304 | 66 | 22 |
| | 1938 | 357 | 69 | 19 |
| | 1943 | 106 | 52 | 49 |
| Bombay | 1928 | 2195 | 27 | 1 |
| | 1933 | 2623 | 149 | 6 |
| | 1938 | 1888 | 61 | 3 |
| | 1943 | 1648 | 19 | 1 |
| Bengal | 1928 | 3287 | 20 | 1 |
| | 1933 | 3433 | 9 | 0 |
| | 1938 | 3996 | 14 | 0 |

*Source*: *Quarterly Catalogue of Publications*.

published by non-Muslims. Most books appeared in print-runs of about 1,000 copies; the majority of them were school textbooks, children's books, practical guidebooks and works of fiction. Punjab was not only the centre of book publication, however; it also boasted some of the most advanced Urdu newspapers of the period. Newspapers were neatly divided according to religious community. The best selling titles amongst Muslims were *Paisa Akhbar*, *Zamindar*, *Inqilab* and in the 1940s also *Nawa'i Waqt*. The most important Hindu-owned papers were *Milap* and *Pratap*, both of which also had separate Delhi and Hindi editions. The circulation numbers of the Urdu press ranged between 15,000 and 20,000, which was small in comparison with English-language dailies, but in excess of most Hindi publishing. Even after the Partition, Urdu titles previously published from Lahore, but now relocated to India, easily outstripped the Hindi press of UP in terms of readership.[49] The most important Urdu newspaper outside Punjab was perhaps the Delhi-based *Weekly* and *Daily Tej*, a publication with close links to Hindu nationalism.

Taking such evidence into account, it is possible to offer the following preliminary delimitation of the Urdu middle-class milieu. The geographic centre was the Punjab where most Urdu-users – although ironically very few Urdu speakers – were located. Of particular importance was the capital city of Lahore, not least because its role as a centre of Urdu publishing created and sustained a sizeable middle-class constituency in itself. The dominance in publishing and journalism

had its roots in economic dynamism and high educational standards that provided the ideal socio-economic backdrop for middle-class development. The Urdu middle-class milieu was not a provincial constituency, however. Urdu publications – both books and newspapers – were exchanged across provincial boundaries and were consumed all over the Indian subcontinent. Both self-expressionism and the culture that sustained it, travelled with them. Books from interwar Lahore can still be seen in private collections in Hyderabad – a large Urdu-reading centre in present-day Andhra Pradesh. The boundaries between Punjab, Delhi and Western UP were particularly fluid, and it would not make any sense to impose too close geographical boundaries on the constituency under review.

A second important observation is that the Urdu middle-class milieu was not only a Muslim formation, but encompassed other religious groups as well. This book will attempt to deal with both Hindus and Muslims as equally as possible. But there is also a need to admit a significant omission that is only justifiable by lack of research time: the Urdu-using middle class of Punjab also had a strong *Sikh* component that had close political and cultural links with its Hindu counterpart. Despite its multi-religious make-up the Urdu middle-class milieu was never a constituency characterized by inter-faith harmony. Communal conflict was rife, particularly in the period of self-expression. There are indications that the shared use of the same language actually made matters worse, as the hurling of abuse at an enemy that could fully appreciate the depth of one's contempt became a popular sport. Instead of a shared public sphere, Urdu constituted, perhaps more than religiously exclusive languages, a shared linguistic battleground.

Finally, we can derive some indications about the numerical size of the Urdu middle-class milieu with the help of literacy figures. Figures in the colonial census, are as always, to be taken with a pinch of salt, as census enumerators often never got to speak to all members of a household, and at any rate employed a fairly crude measure of literacy – being able to write a letter to a government department. More problematically, the Census only records proficiency in 'vernacular' languages and does not allow us to determine the respective number of Hindi and Urdu users. But the following figures are nevertheless a good guideline for the reach of a 'middle class' culture in either language. The most significant indicator for our purpose is the rate of female literacy for the age group of 10–15 years. Female literacy rates are generally much lower than male ones, and the fact that a family was wealthy enough and bothered to educate their daughters definitely places them in a constituency whose culture gave importance to reading. In 1931, when the most extensive and accurate census was taken, the figures for the largest cities of UP and Punjab were 11 and 18 per cent respectively. Male literacy for the same age group were much higher, 36 per cent in UP and 37 per cent in Punjab.[50] An additional consideration is literacy in English, as bilingualism was common in the upper most echelons of the Urdu middle-class milieu. Between 7 and 10 percent of the population appear to have fallen into this category. All in all, it is probable that about 20 to 25 per cent of the *urban* population qualify for inclusion in the subject matter of this book.

## A road map of the argument

This book is not a historical study in the conventional sense. It does not offer a chronological narrative within the framework of a specific time period that could be clearly demarcated by certain key dates. 'Events' of the kind that one reads about in standard histories do not matter much for the argument; this study is about cultural processes that answer to a much slower pace of historical change than occurrences at the level of high politics. The main focus of interest lies on the era between 1930 and 1950, but frequent reference is made both to earlier and later developments. Readers who require some form of narrative history as backdrop information are referred to the second section of Chapter 1 where a brief and regionally specific sketch of the main developments is provided. The order of this book is topical, but the progression of chapters follows a certain logic. We begin with an analysis of the politics of self-expression as a political culture and then seek to identify its sociological foundations, first within a concrete frame of reference and later within a new theoretical framework of explanation that can tie all the different strands of the argument together. The chapters also mark a journey from the familiar to the unfamiliar, at least as far as the conventions of South Asian historiography are concerned.

Chapter 1 begins with a re-examination of well-trodden ground. The critical description of a 'politics of interest' under the colonial regime contains much that may already be known to students of South Asian history. The purpose of this exercise is to provide the context in which a 'politics of self-expression' was formulated, as well as to sketch an analytical counterfoil that helps us to distinguish our subject from other and more conventional forms of politics. The observations made in this context remain important for the remainder of this book, as the argument constantly returns to the 'politics of interest' as a point of reference. The first chapter then moves on to a sketch of the ideological content of the politics of self-expression. Once again we start with relatively familiar figures, Subhas Chandra Bose and V.D. Savarkar, and move on to less familiar ones, the Khaksar leader Inyatullah Khan Mashriqi and some lesser-known student activists within the Muslim League movement. The overall aim is to construct something like a unitary discursive subject – 'the' politics of self-expression – out of a number of arguments that were proposed by different political theorists at the time. The integration and connection of the thought worlds of the 'prophets' of self-expression has been given priority over a reading that tries to tease out the many differences that existed between them. The reason behind this method of exposition is that this book seeks to analyse the politics of self-expression as a larger formation of political culture, not offer intellectual biographies of its most prominent participants.

Chapter 2 is about self-expressionist modes of action, its characteristic stylistic vocabulary and its distinctive register of political experience. Echoing the title of a well-known historiography textbook, this is about the 'content of the form' of politics. The assumption is that the central aims of self-expressionist politics

are much more clearly visible in what political activists actually did, than in what they wrote. The new politics was fundamentally different from the late colonial politics of interest by virtue of how it used texts and how it engaged in collective agitation. Some familiar organizational patterns and concepts – the disciplined party, the State – are re-examined under the light of the purpose of self-expressionism. The chapter ends in an exposition of perhaps the most distinctive form of self-expressionist action: masochistic practices involving the activists' own bodies.

Chapter 3 takes the argument from an analytical description of what self-expressionism was all about into a search for what 'caused' it. The specific topic is the emphasis that self-expressionists placed on 'inner' experiences that often had a strong physical component. The roots of this inward turn are located in the peculiar form of cultural consciousness with which the middle-class milieu distinguished itself from other social groups. As a survey of pamphlets, reformist tracts and journalistic writing will demonstrate, it was a person's relationship with the body above everything else that made him or her 'middle class'. Matters of diet, hygiene and sexual self-control for both men and women were of central importance. But as the second half of the chapter elaborates, corporeal issues did not only account for what made the middle class, they also explain what divided this social constituency into different and mutually hostile segments.

Chapter 4 provides a socio-cultural explanation for the other great obsession of the politics of self-expression: the exaggerated emphasis on meta-historical collectivities and a denigration of the importance of the local and the immediate. Drawing on the theoretical insights of Henri Lefebvre, it is argued that this peculiar worldview was the result of how middle class restructured their relationship with living spaces. As avid readers, they fled into media universes that for a variety of reasons emphasized the global over the local. At the same time, middle-class people developed an alienated relationship with the spaces they encountered on a day-to-day basis. The argument is illustrated by a detailed case study of the spatial structure of middle-class life in Lahore.

Chapter 5, finally, attempts to situate the socio-genesis of self-expressionism within the wider problematic of a consumer society. Drawing on the insights of Jean Baudrillard, the first sections of the chapter offer a detailed examination of consumer culture in the Urdu middle-class milieu. The main focus of attention is advertising discourse, but other sources such as social satire and 'social' instruction literature are also brought into the discussion. The chapter ends in a return to political culture and attempts to interpret the main features of the politics of self-expression as an extension into politics of consumer behaviour.

Readers with limited time who want to get a gist of the argument should browse through Chapter 1 and then concentrate on Chapters 2 and 5. Those primarily interested in a detailed depiction of cultural life in the Urdu middle-class milieu, or in the presentation of unfamiliar source material, should read Chapters 3 and 4, as well as Chapter 5.

# 1

# POLITICS AGAINST SOCIETY

The politics of self-expression is an anti-societal form of politics. Although often pre-occupied with issues of political identity, its practitioners were mostly uninterested in the question of how people construct and negotiate relationships with one another. There was little positive recognition that human beings are embedded in a 'fabric' of society. Ideas about the exercise of social or political power remained crude. If acknowledged at all, the conflict over the allocation of social and cultural resources was resolutely kept at the margins of political thought. Instead, the politicians of self-expression contemplated sealed, self-absorbed and un-networked subjects that engage in a game of fierce mutual competition without any clear aim. The only discernible objective was the desire to express an inherent sense of being and to have this being recognized as 'authentic' and 'strong' by an imaginary audience – often called 'the eyes of the world' or the 'golden letters of history'[1] – whose nature was no less nebulous than the nature of competition itself.

This anti-societal attitude marks a clear break from the kind of interest-based politics that the indigenous notable and professional classes of India pursued throughout the late colonial period. Without conceding any real possibility of independence, the colonial regime had largely succeeded in channelling political activity into the straightjacket of limited self-rule, confined to institutions such as municipal boards, provincial assemblies and other closely circumscribed bodies. By forcibly reducing political interest to bread-and-butter issues or matters of prestige relevant to elites, colonial rule could simultaneously co-opt and divide the most articulate and powerful sections of Indian society. This was the kind of politics that the activists of self-expression knew and hated, and that they wished to replace with their own apocalyptic visions. The pathological nature of self-expressionism was thus rooted in the more general pathology of the colonial regime. Despite fundamental formal differences, the politics of interest and the politics of self-expression were connected by historical experience. The politics of self-expression emerged in the cracks and fissures, so to speak, of the old politics of interest. This breaking-out of the colonial straightjacket was signified by a political language of statehood and militarism that often went beyond the usual parameters of the political as conventionally understood. Abstract power became

the be all and end all of politics – a shift that did not only deny society, but ultimately also historical agency in any meaningful form.

This chapter and the next seek to sketch out the contours of the politics of self-expression so as to open it up for wider socio-cultural analysis. This necessitates a recapitulation of the politics of interest – both as a body of political theory and as a historical formation – a task to which the first two sections of this chapter are dedicated. Having thus created an appropriate space for the discussion of the politics of self-expression, this chapter moves on to an exposition of the thought and political practice of the most important 'prophets' of self-expressionism. Separate sections deal with the contributions of Subhas Chandra Bose, V.D. Savarkar and Inayatullah Khan 'Mashriqi'. The chapter ends in an examination of how self-expressionism became part of the political mainstream – focusing on the politics of Muslim nationalism, where this process can be most clearly demonstrated. At this point it will become apparent that self-expressionism was not simply a discourse – a body of arguments expressed in writing – but a wider political formation with a distinct grammar of action. It is in Chapter 2 that the analysis shifts accordingly from text to practice, from discourse to historical experience.

## The political science of rulers

The story of the 'politics of interest' – a pseudo-liberal framework of politics supported by the British colonialists for the purpose of making control over a foreign country easier – has been extensively covered in the historiography of South Asia. Particularly important in this context has been the contribution of the so-called 'Cambridge School', a loose grouping of mainly British historians and their disciples who began research into the regional politics of Indian nationalism at the end of the 1960s, and whose approach has been replicated in numerous case studies until up to the late 1980s. The basic assumption was that ideological convictions could be eliminated from historical explanation by uncovering an intricate network of individual interests behind the actions and pronouncements of leading political players. Particularly relevant for the subject area of this book are the works of Francis Robinson, Christopher Bayly, Ian Talbot, Ayesha Jalal, Peter Reeves and B.R. Tomlinson.[2] Despite some differences in theoretical and political orientation, these contributions shared a common focus on the interface between Indian elite politicians and the colonial regime. The tools of interpreting 'native' political behaviour were directly borrowed from the wisdom of high colonial officials. This practice of replication was not seen as problematic but, on the contrary, as the most natural and sensible way of coming to grips with South Asian political realities.[3] The main justification was that since little more than a couple of thousand Europeans managed to rule over hundreds of millions of Indians for one and a half centuries, there must have been substantial truth in how the colonialists interpreted the workings of Indian politics.

The classic story of the politics of interest begins at some point in the second half of the nineteenth century and takes as its base line the political economy of

'liberal' Empire. Despite their rhetoric of a 'civilizing mission' the British did not envision a penetrative or interventionist state. Colonial involvement in the fields of health care, primary education, famine relief and economic development ranged from token gestures to criminal neglect.[4] For much of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century the Raj had to serve a limited number of objectives: there was the maintenance of an economic regime that allowed British entrepreneurs to trade with the subcontinent on favourable terms and to extract raw materials or grow basic agricultural commodities on the cheap; then there was the use of India as a strategic reserve, centred around the establishment of an Indian army that could be used as an expeditionary force elsewhere in the Empire. A further requirement was that neither of these objectives should cost the British tax payer anything and that Indians themselves should be made to foot the bill for the entire enterprise of their own subjugation.[5] All this could be achieved with political intervention restricted to four general areas: tax-collection, the upkeep of law and order, military recruitment and the maintenance of a basic transport and administrative infrastructure. In all these areas as much activity as possible was farmed out to Indian collaborators who would serve as the intermediaries between colonial state power and the wider population. From a colonial point of view, politics was confined to seeking out effective local collaborators and to ensuring their compliance with the regime; from the Indian elite point of view, it meant participating in this game so as to ensure that one did not lose one's wealth, influence and status.[6]

Imperial interests may have been fairly limited in the late nineteenth-century context, but they threw up a number of problems as the Raj entered the early twentieth century. Put very simply, there was a contradiction between the need to raise more and more state revenues in order to meet imperial obligations on the one hand, and the ability to run the country with minimum political interference on the other. The impact of the two World Wars and the Great Depression of 1929 made such balancing acts ever more difficult. By 1947, the powerbrokers at the Imperial centre concluded that their strategic and commercial interests were better safeguarded if direct political control over the subcontinent was passed on to indigenous elites. In the eyes of policy makers at the time, and of those historians who rely on the their assessment, the Raj was never really defeated. De-colonization was only a rearrangement of the relationship between metropolitan and indigenous interests within the remit of state power.[7]

As a regime largely bereft of any ideological legitimacy, the Raj did not believe that legitimate politics had a great deal to do with convictions. Elite Indians were accorded an 'isn't-he-a-jolly-good-chap' kind of respect and the political freedom that went with it – as long as they were seen as ambitious and cynical men who looked only after their own 'self-interest'. The politicking of such people posed no danger to the Empire because they could be played out against each other and bought off by considerations from the Government. The most trustworthy and 'authentic' of Indian politicians therefore did not even make much effort to pretend they had strong ideological beliefs. Such men of 'influence and substance'

were easily turned into stakeholders of the colonial enterprise because they had substantial material possessions to defend. They were landlords, professionals and industrialists who knew what side their bread was buttered and whom the Raj was usually quite willing to oblige.

More troublesome were the supporters of nationalism who decried self-interest in the name of a collective common good that was not open to bargaining in the District Commissioner's drawing room. Such politicians of conviction were made manageable with the help of manoeuvres of thought that restored a sense of smug knowingness and political mastery to the colonial mindset. The first step was to assume that these nationalists were really 'self-seeking' cynics who only *used* nationalism in order to further their own interests. They could then be subdivided into two groups: there were those who were also wealthy men of interest and therefore potential collaborators, and there were the so-called 'professional agitators' who had no possessions to lose and depended on political activity for their living.[8] They could not be reigned in as easily by material concessions. In order to put any major worries about the activities of such people to rest, the political scientists of the Raj claimed in a masterful tautological sweep that professional agitators were by definition 'un-representative'. Precisely because 'authentic' Indians were either entirely a-political or self-seeking materialists, they argued, ideologues of any sort could never really find any genuine followers. Rather like the proverbial student communists in front of the factory gate, nationalist activists were thought to speak for nobody but themselves.[9]

If all this did not suffice to explain reality in a politically convenient way, the ultimate ideological weapon of colonial thought was brought to bear: the invocation of the 'natural' fanaticism of the Indian population. At this point the entire register of colonial political science changed from a self-assured affirmation of control over a grateful people to the angry denunciation of the irredeemable native who stood outside the realm of the political altogether. Organized political action against the Raj was interpreted as the 'outbreak' of mob violence that happened as if by force of nature and not due to any comprehensible political issues. Religion and superstition were wheeled in as blanket explanations for anything that may have pointed to a political failure of the colonial regime. Such an interpretation only reinforced the prejudice that Indians were inherently politically immature. Any serious challenge to colonialism was conveniently turned into yet another argument for why colonialism was necessary in the first place. The complex grievances and the growing anti-imperialist consciousness behind the Great Rebellion of 1857, for instance, were reduced to the matter of soldiers of different religious backgrounds having qualms about licking cartridges greased with animal fat.[10]

Several elements in this conception of politics were informed by the liberal consensus of late nineteenth-century Britain. The colonial vision broadly agreed with the basic tenet that the public good – if, indeed, there was such a thing – consisted in the individual material benefits that people could secure under the protection of competent but reticent governance. If a political process of mutual

accommodation was required at all, it was to be restricted to a select group of gentlemen who had an interest in maintaining the status quo. The number of political actors deemed to be legitimate grew over time, and the institutional framework in which the colonial regime sought to contain them expanded correspondingly. But there was never any sense that politics should be everybody's business. The Raj started off with informal consultation between colonial officials and local 'men of note' and ended with a truncated electoral system that gave the vote to no more than one-quarter of the total population, set apart from their countrymen by moderate wealth and education.[11] The restrictive nature of such politics was underscored by the fact that it was largely confined to the local and later the provincial level. The colonial provinces were in most cases artificial entities drawn up for administrative convenience. This meant that legitimate provincial politics could not move beyond a range of bread-and-butter issues that were by definition detached from larger issues of collective power and identity.

The colonial commitment to liberal politics was largely formalistic, however. The vision of a rational society of individuals was too closely associated with processes of modernization – the emergence of free trade and the free wage contract, equality before the law, secularization and so on. These achievements were seen as signs of European superiority, and had to be denied to non-European peoples that were colonized under the pretext of historical backwardness. In consequence, a place like India could never be seen as a domain populated by self-governing individuals. Instead, colonial observers attested the omnipresence of primordial collectivities that displayed all the negative features that European history had supposedly overcome. These entities included 'tribes', 'castes' and above all religious 'communities'. They were all pre-political in their conception: their membership and internal workings were not considered as open to conflict and negotiation, but as set by essentialist and natural affinities. One simply *was* a 'Hindu', a 'Muslim', a 'Brahmin' or whatever else, and one would invariably act according to the unchanging codes of behaviour that these identities demanded.

The emphasis on collective units did not mean that the colonial worldview was 'communitarian' in the sense of recent political theory. In a way, colonial ideology simply superimposed the logic of self-contained individuals as the building blocks of liberal politics onto the level of communities. 'The Hindus', 'the Muslims' as well as assorted tribes and castes appeared as collective personae who pursued their own material interests in similar ways as individuals. What mattered was not the working of communities as intricate political institutions, but their existence as crude and opaque building blocks of the social world. Indian social reality was not perceived as a fabric, but as a mosaic. There was a Hobbsian twist to this vision, however. The collective personae that made up Indian life were not naturally disposed towards rational cooperation in the same way as the self-contained gentlemen of the liberal imagination; rather, their natural state was one of perpetual warfare. This was perhaps the most powerful argument that the British Raj used to legitimize itself: India was not a 'nation' or even a 'society', but a communal battleground brought under temporary control by the

forcible but benign intervention of outside arbiters. In the distant past, it was the Aryan invaders who 'pacified' the country; later during the Middle Ages it was the Muslims; the British were only the most recent and most enlightened executers of a historic prerogative.[12] This vision implied that politics per se could ever only exist as an imposition. It had to be artificially sustained by a remote centre of power that owed its legitimacy to its disconnectedness from, rather than its embedded-ness in, local societal structures.

The colonial vision of a pseudo-liberal politics of interest in India opened up a disjuncture between the political process and the large majority of the ruled. The politics of interest could be kept safe by locking a small number of self-interested gentlemen into institutions of limited self-rule. But how could this actually ensure control over those pre-political collectivities that inherently threatened any 'rational' forms of politics? The answer was an assumption of political 'representation' that operated top-down rather than bottom-up. The colonialists were not interested in processes by which the communal building blocks of Indian society could chose their own representatives or deliberate their own political ideals and demands. The Raj simply appointed 'men of influence' as the representatives of such larger communities, hoping that recognition from above would automatically give these men enough political clout and importance as to give substance to their assumption of representative-ness. The linkages of power that would bind the recognized representatives at the top to those at the bottom consisted in patron–client relationships. Through such chains of obligation, 'representatives' would channel the material benefits they received from engagement with the colonial political process downwards. This was supposed to keep large sections of the population quiet by making them stakeholders of the regime by proxy. Patronage thus became the key concept in political micro-management and in subsequent historiography and social science analysis.[13] If one was to understand politics in a place like colonial India, or indeed in its successor states, one had to know who was in the good books of whom, who was married to whose second cousin's daughter and what this faction or that faction had to lose by antagonizing major powerbrokers.

There was an additional way of bridging the gap between a deliberately disconnected political system and the great majority of the ruled that limited the purview of the political even further. This was the artificial imputation of societal interests with the help of the sciences, most notably statistics. By delineating the numerical strength of tribes, communities and castes, their state of educational achievement, their share in government jobs and a host of other 'objective' indicators, the colonial state could gain a fair picture of what the material interests of such groups ideally should be, and how these interests should be balanced against those of competing groups. The most powerful instrument for this endeavour was the decennial census, supplemented by anthropological research and – towards the very end of the colonial period – more sophisticated forms of sociological enquiry.[14] The assumption that the numerical strength of certain communities should determine their share of resources naturally took the political element out

of the question of resource allocation and turned it into a merely administrative measure. If the interests of certain communities could be known a priori, then there was no need for relationships of conflict and negotiation within them. The politics of interest was not only anti-societal – since there was no politics in society anymore – but even to an extent non-political altogether: even the legitimate representatives of communal interest had very little to 'bargain' over, save, of course, matters related to their self-promotion and self-enrichment, pursuits that would turn them automatically into loyalists of sorts.

Colonial ideology did not allow for any reasonable way of rejecting the Raj, or the politics of interest on which it was based. The colonial claim to power rested on an ability to perceive any of their subjects in one of two ways that both denigrated and caricatured them: if they 'played ball' with the regime they were seen as likeably corrupt; if they had political ideas that were not reducible to the straightjacket of a politics of interest, they were deemed to be beyond the pale of reason – to be contained or crushed by brute force. Seen from within, the colonial state was thus invincible and immortal. The desire to critically unmask any form of ideological conviction as a politics of interest was nothing but an expression of the will to rule, formulated by the custodians of an apparatus of power that was alien to its subjects and completely bereft of any form of legitimacy.

## The politics of interest and its limits

The story of the politics of interest, as told by the Cambridge historians and their expert witnesses in the colonial services, moves between three interlocking levels of analysis: first, a micro-level of factional rivalries that pitted men of influence against each other irrespective of socio-economic position or religion; then selective interest-group politics at the provincial level that sometimes cut across religious loyalties and finally the grand numbers game played out by statistically demarcated macro-communities, most notably 'the Hindus' and 'the Muslims'. It is worth recapitulating how the interaction between these three levels of analysis shaped the politics of interest in the two parts of India most relevant for this book: the Punjab and the United Provinces. The aim of the exposition is twofold: first, to sketch the dynamics of the kind of politics that emplaced the politics of self-expression – both on the ground and in historiography – second, and more mundanely, to provide some historical background narrative for future reference.

In the period before the introduction of extended institutions of self-government, the level of micro-patronage was most important. There was no formalized political system to reflect the relative numerical strength of larger constituencies. The colonial regime simply related to local men of importance because they were deemed useful for the maintenance of control. In both provinces under review, collaborators fell into roughly two camps: on one side, there were landowners of mixed religious composition but with a preponderance of Muslims, and on the other side, city-based traders, financiers and professional men of a predominantly Hindu background. Both camps were essential to the running of the political

economy of the Raj, and both were believed to possess social influence that made them ideal intermediaries between the wider population and the state. Landlord politicians controlled the countryside by virtue of the almost total power they wielded over their tenant farmers. Urban commercial men meanwhile maintained the cash nexus that kept the colonial economy together; they pre-financed revenue payments through agricultural loans, and marketed and distributed agricultural commodities. Both camps of leading men had large numbers of directly dependent clients and enhanced their social standing through philanthropic activities, often associated with religious or educational ventures.[15]

The Raj sought to cultivate the goodwill of both groups of men, but had a proclivity to favour landowning and Muslim interests as they were seen as both more vulnerable and strategically more important. In the United Provinces this favouritism took the form of recruitment into government jobs that went well beyond the demographic strength of the Muslim community.[16] In the Punjab, the protection of landowning interests – including that of Muslim landowners – was based on an interventionist set of policies that were unusual for the generally 'liberal' orientation of the Raj. The prime instrument of control was a system of laws – enshrined in the Land Alienation Act of 1901 – that restricted land-ownership to a designated group of 'agriculturalist' castes and tribes including most Muslims and Sikhs, as well as Jat Hindus. The purpose of this was to prevent urban commercial men from investing in landed property, as it was feared that they would use their economic power to gradually dispossess the established landowning class.[17] In addition to legal interference in free economic exchange, there was some degree of social engineering. Large-scale irrigation projects created vast canal colonies that were allocated to mainly 'agriculturalist' settlers according to government recommendation. The Punjabi 'hydraulic state' thus became the prime agency that controlled access to agricultural land and used this power to reward loyalist behaviour.[18]

The difference in co-optation policy in the two provinces was directly related to their respective importance for the political economy of the Raj. The United Provinces comprised much of the old Mughal heartlands and had been the seedbed of rebellion during the 1857 uprising, but its political and economic importance had declined throughout the late colonial period. The Raj could afford to adopt a relatively hands-off approach. The Punjab, in contrast, was one of the key provinces in the imperial system of control. The main reason was the military importance of the region; it was both one of India's primary recruiting grounds and the geographic area where according to military planners the defence of the subcontinent against outside invasions would have to take place. The position of the Raj in such an area had to be made absolutely unassailable. For this end, the usual strategy of a politics of interest was fortified by concerted attempts to create a loyalist rural constituency.[19]

The colonial politics of interest withstood the first wave of India-wide nationalist mass mobilization – the Khilafat/Non-Cooperation movement of 1920–2 – relatively easily, although both provinces saw widespread direct action.

Muslim and Hindu agitators campaigned on a united platform, but for different aims: the former wanted to prevent the British from dismantling the Ottoman Empire because they saw the Sultan as the leader (*khalifa*) of the worldwide Muslim community; the latter wanted to paralyze the colonial government machinery in order to attain some measurement of self-rule (*swaraj*). The weakness of the movement – as Francis Robinson has pointed out – was that it did not appeal to the most powerful men of interest in either religious community. The Muslim agitators involved belonged to the so-called 'Young Party', a group that Robinson (and the colonial officials he echoed) saw as a bunch of disaffected intellectuals who had no means to support themselves but political action itself.[20] Such men could create a lot of noise and do a lot of rabble-rousing, but they had no real power to fall back upon. The Congress, meanwhile, entered the movement under the leadership of Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, but without the blessing of powerful Hindu men of interest who distrusted an alliance with Muslim agitators and were dismayed by the mobilization of large segments of the urban and rural proletariat.[21] When the movement was finally called off at Gandhi's behest, the politics of interest emerged victorious. The 1919 Montagu Chelmsford reform package introduced shared ministerial power at provincial level for the first time, a system referred to as 'dyarchy'. In both Punjab and UP, landowner politicians and loyalist Hindu commercial men unconnected to nationalism assumed limited positions of governmental responsibility.

It is at the time of the Great Depression of 1929 that the two provincial narratives go their separate ways. Both areas were hit extremely hard by the recession; but while the politicians of interest in the UP did very little to alleviate economic hardship, Punjabi landed grandees such as Sir Fazl-e-Hussain were able to gain concessions from the Imperial centre that offered some measure of protection to the Punjabi peasantry.[22] In consequence, the Punjab state managed to further consolidate its relationship with a wider constituency of village elites, while the UP government still relied on a system of control by proxy that depended heavily on a handful of very large landowners. This weakness was exploited by a resurgent Congress during the 1930–3 Civil Disobedience Campaign (also famous for Gandhi's 'Salt March'). Although the movement itself failed to reach any of its goals, the Congress party succeeded in organizing large sections of small landowners and rich farmers that had so far been out of the loop of government patronage.[23] Congress grass-root institutions were set up all over the province, and colonial bureaucrats became increasingly worried about the existence of 'parallel government' in the UP countryside.[24] The chicken came home to roost, when provincial elections according to the new Government of India Act were held in 1937. A still restrictive but much widened franchise ensured that Congress could translate its organizational strength amongst the rich peasantry into electoral success.

The Punjab Congress was a very different beast from its UP equivalent. The mass campaigns of the 1930s and 1940s found little echo in this province[25], and there was no question of Congress organizing a 'parallel state' in the Punjab

countryside. Official Indian nationalism was almost entirely confined to the Hindu and Sikh commercial elites. When it came to issues such as protecting the rights of farmers and peasants against agricultural financiers, Punjab Congress delegates invariably opted for the interests of the latter, even if this was irreconcilable with the Congress' professed pro-peasant stance. Amongst its opponents, the Provincial Congress Committee was sarcastically referred to as the 'Punjab Insurance Control Council'.[26] In the eyes of a 'disgusted' Jawaharlal Nehru, 'the Congress in the Punjab simply mean[t] a handful of persons in a few cities, and that handful quarrelling continuously'.[27]

The kind of agriculturalist constituency that secured Congress power in UP remained firmly tied to the loyalist camp in Punjab. Their political organization, the Punjab Unionist Party, represented a far wider constituency than the UP landowner associations who included only large or very large landlords. The Unionists were not exactly a mass party, but they operated with the help of tribal and caste loyalties that reached far into village society. This paid off during the 1937 elections, when the party under the leadership of Sir Sikandar Hayat Khan won a secure majority based on the votes of most rural Muslims, as well as with cooperation from Hindu and Sikh Jats. Unionist power was to remain practically unassailable until the elections of 1946.[28]

The 1937 elections were a turning point in Indian history because they brought the communal number game to the forefront of the politics of interest. Under the extended system of electoral politics, it was no longer possible for the Raj to pursue a limited strategy of elite favouritism that kept all 'men of influence' in some way linked to state power. Some previously influential interest groups had now become electoral minorities. In the UP the most badly affected group were the Muslim *zamindars* and *taluqdars*, immensely powerful by virtue of their vast landholdings, but also singularly unable to translate their minuscule numerical strength into electoral weight.[29] In the Punjab, a similarly disadvantaged group was the Khatri commercial elite who were forever outnumbered by the agriculturalist constituency. The marginalization of both minority interest groups was made worse by the actions of the newly appointed governments of 1937. The UP Congress and the Punjab Unionists had to deliver for those who voted for them, and this meant to visibly tip the balance of power against the interests of minorities. The Congress Premier Govind Balabh Pant embarked on a programme of land reform designed to eliminate the *zamindars* and *taluqdars* but to strengthen the smallholders and rich peasants. In addition, he sought to reward urban Hindus by reducing the persistent over-representation of Muslims in government recruitment.[30] Sir Sikandar in the Punjab, meanwhile, initiated legislation that shored up the exclusion of Khatri Hindus and Sikhs from access to agricultural land and offered further protection to agriculturalists against non-agriculturalist moneylenders.[31]

Neither of the newly disadvantaged minority groups – UP high-born Muslims and Punjabi Hindu and Sikh commercial men – could safeguard their influence at the level of provincial politics, and so both groups chose to use alliances at the

all-India level to secure their political future. In moves that mirrored each other to a remarkable extent, minority Muslims and minority Hindus reached out to their respective nationalist movements in order to gain access to state power that was secure from the vagaries of majority rule.[32] Punjabi non-agriculturalist Hindus favoured the Congress as well as hard-line Hindu nationalist groups, because they promised to establish a centralized state that would remain under some form of 'Hindu' control. UP Muslims, in contrast, wanted some form of constitutional arrangement that recognized complete parity between 'the Muslims' and 'the Hindus', thereby annihilating any numerical advantage that one community had over the other.

This desire was the main idea behind the famous 'Two-Nation Theory' propagated by the Bombay barrister Muhammad Ali Jinnah who had emerged as the new leader of a rejuvenated All-India Muslim League. Nobody has analysed – and rationalized in the fashion of colonial political science – the story of Jinnah's proposal better than Cambridge historian Ayesha Jalal.[33] The problem with the formula of equal recognition was that it had no basis in the actual power constellation on the ground. The League was not strong enough as an organization to force anybody to accept its rather extravagant demands. Jinnah's only chance – if he had one at all – lay in aligning all Muslims of India behind his negotiating position. This was difficult because most of them, including those in Punjab, lived in Muslim majority provinces where they had enjoyed considerable electoral power already. A Muslim dominated party like the Punjab Unionists was interested in maintaining its provincial autonomy, not in a two-nation formula. Jinnah managed to temporarily bridge such differences by proposing a combination of Muslim nationalism with far-reaching decentralization plans. The League adopted this still very nebulous set of aims in the famous 1940 Lahore Resolution, popularly known as the 'Pakistan Resolution'.

The uneasy alliance between Muslim majority interests and the League soon broke down. The death of Sir Sikandar Hayat Khan and the ascension of Khizr Hayat Khan Tiwana to the Punjab Unionist leadership brought the contradiction between majority and minority interests back into the open, and turned the Punjab into the focal point of the political future of South Asia. The League had to break the Unionist power base in order to be heard as the 'sole spokesman' of the Muslim community in India, and to give the 'Pakistan' demand any chance of realization. They achieved their goal in the 1946 elections in which the Unionists lost their status as largest representative of the Muslim vote in the province.

Analysts working in the politics of interest paradigm have mobilized their entire heuristic tool kit in order to explain this landmark shift of political loyalty. There was a larger all-India political logic at work: by 1946, decolonization had become a certainty; and in the absence of 'Pakistan', the Punjab would become part of a centralized state run by Congress that was bound to curtail Muslim landowner power in the province. As a purely provincial party the Unionists had no means to resolve this problem. Then there was factionalism: the League could exploit long-standing rivalries within the Unionist camp in order to wean away

influential landowners; at some point defection turned from a trickle into a flood because nervous politicians felt that they may be missing the bandwagon.[34] The documentary evidence for this reading of events is strong. Even at the height of its mobilization campaign for 'Pakistan', the Muslim League was unable to set up functioning grass-root organizational structures in the way the Congress had done in UP. The correspondence between Jinnah and the Punjab League leaderships speaks of factionalism and distrust; things were so bad that Jinnah had to route all donations to the League through his personal office, as nobody at a lower level was deemed fully accountable.[35] Finally, there was, of course, religious manipulation – the most potent weapon in the colonial arsenal that never failed to explain otherwise inexplicable political events. According to this often quoted line of argument, it was the influence of Muslim clerics and mystic saints that persuaded the less politically mature amongst the rich peasantry to vote for the League.[36]

The Muslim League victory in Punjab (and other Muslim majority provinces) ushered in the final stage of negotiations over India's future. The British were keen to hand over power to a Congress movement whose leadership had by then become entirely 'reasonable' in the sense of a politics of interest. The Muslim League negotiator had no leeway to insist on a vision of far-reaching decentralization, and was finally forced into accepting an unsatisfactory two-state solution. There was now a sovereign country called 'Pakistan', but its creation divided the provinces of Punjab and Bengal, left a large number of Muslims within the area of the Indian Union and unleashed one of the biggest waves of ethnic cleansing and forced migration in twentieth-century history.

The story of the politics of interest in UP and Punjab does not stop at the moment of Partition, however. The politicians of interest continued to negotiate their relationship with provincial and central states. The UP story has not yet been fully recorded;[37] but a broad continuity with the late 1930s is apparent. The new Chief Minister of UP – Govind Balabh Pant – was the same who had led the first Congress government elected under the limited 1937 franchise. The key policy area remained land reform legislation that destroyed the old *taluqdari* and *zamindari* elite, and assured the rise to dominance of medium landowners and rich farmers.[38] The continuity between the late colonial and post-colonial situation indicated a victory for the general strategic aims of the colonial state. It succeeded in turning the Congress from a radical mass movement into a responsible party of government, dominated by stakeholder nationalists. This was a Congress the British could do business with both at the point of decolonization and beyond.

The final instalment of the Punjab narrative – focusing on its Muslim/Western wing – also points to continuities between the pre- and post-Partition situation. But there was no success story there. No constituency of stakeholder nationalists with a secure organizational base emerged, and no neat integration between national and provincial politics took place. The Pakistani central state mutated within a matter of years into a neo-colonial edifice that was almost as remote from it subjects and as close to metropolitan interests as the Raj had been. The centre of power was increasingly located in a coalition of the bureaucracy and

the military who relied very strongly on backing from the United States.[39] Instead of moving towards a system of electoral politics based on universal adult franchise, the new Pakistani regime rolled back even the limited forms of participatory politics provided under the old colonial regime. Provincial politics that had been at the centre of the old politics of interest for so long was largely dismantled, not least because the power brokers at the centre feared the ascendancy of middle-class politicians based in the Eastern province of Bengal. A particularly poignant episode in this development occurred in 1953, when representatives of the old landowning interests in Punjab sought to utilize a mass mobilization campaign in order to recapture some degree of state power. The then chief minister of the province, Mumtaz Daultana, gave tacit backing to a popular movement led by the usual 'professional agitators'. The overt aim was to have the members of the Ahmadi (or Qadiani) religious community declared non-Muslims. The real objective in terms of the politics of interest, however, was to destabilize the central government in order to allow a Punjabi provincial clique more access to state resources. The agitation ended like most other attempts at mass politics – with the defeat of those who led it and with a further retrenchment of state power propped up by repression and a crude politics of patronage.[40]

The story of the politics of interest still stands as the standard narrative of political development in early twentieth-century India and Pakistan. There has been substantive criticism from writers seeking to recover the authenticity of Indian nationalism – both mainstream and popular – from the clutches of colonial discourses of control.[41] But little comparable effort has been made in the field of Muslim nationalism, which is of particular importance within the wider remit of this book. The regional histories of North Western India – particularly that of the Punjab – are still substantively confined in the colonial mould, as is much political science literature about the successor state of Pakistan. The narrative woven around a politics of interest is not 'wrong' in an immediate sense; on the contrary, the continuing dominance of this narrative is a testimony to the factual strength of the regimes of power that engendered it in the first place. As long as there is an ill-legitimized state apparatus bound to assert control over a society that it does not penetrate, there will be a politics of interest to write about. What concerns us here is how the story of the politics of interest has managed to make invisible the story of the politics of self-expression. It is only through simultaneously acknowledging and deconstructing the dominant narrative that we can identify the space in which the politics of self-expression is located. This task replicates in many ways what the politicians of self-expressions themselves were after, when they bitterly attacked a restrictive form of politics that did not accord any legitimacy or importance to matters of self-hood, collective identity and experiences of power.

The key to the politics of self-expression is the impossibility of a politics of class within the straightjacket of the politics of interest. The Raj as well as some of the post-colonial formations that succeeded it, preferred to deal with people rather than with classes of people. With the partial exception of agricultural

policy in Punjab, the colonial regime had neither the inclination nor the capability to engage in large-scale processes of socio-economic engineering that could build a loyalist mass constituency. The logic of a colonial state prohibited such a policy. Powerful mass constituencies make the state hostage to their demands; a politics of interest based on patronage networks, in contrast, encourages elite rivalries that allow the state to remain autonomous from the society it seeks to govern. 'Cambridge' historians have been adamant that the colonial regime was largely successful in forestalling the emergence of class politics at various levels of the Indian social hierarchy. Since a patronage system of jobbers and foremen controlled the colonial labour market – Raj Chandavarkar has argued – there was no development of a colonial working class in the political sense, for instance.[42] More important for the remit of this book is the impossibility of a politically conscious middle class – a point vehemently argued by David Washbrook and Anil Seal, and in a more open-ended way also by Francis Robinson and Christopher Bayly.[43] Contrary to earlier nationalist narratives of a 'new middle class' ascending to power through the Congress movement, these historians demonstrated that those men who could be externally classified as middle class – urban professionals, journalists, lawyers and government servants – did in fact never act as a single group. Instead, they operated as the public relations officers and mouthpieces of local men of influence; in other words, they were part of vertical patronage networks, not of horizontal class organization. Whenever members of a middle-class constituency, broadly speaking, appeared to slip out of the control by such patronage networks – for instance, the Muslim 'Young Party' in early twentieth-century Muslim politics – they were rationalized as a group of failed individuals, rather than as the products of processes of social change. Francis Robinson was incredulous about the adoption of the designation 'middle class' by people like the Ali brothers, and quick to unmask such people as scions of the landed elite who had not made it in life.[44]

The political non-existence of a middle class does not mean that there were no grounds for the development of a middle-class milieu in a wider social and cultural sense, however. There is ample statistical and other evidence to suggest that the group of those who could broadly fit into a middle-class bracket expanded rapidly between the 1890s and the end of the colonial Raj. Particularly relevant in this context is the case of urban Punjab, epitomized by the capital city of Lahore. Gross population figures are indicative of social change: Lahore expanded from 228,687 inhabitants in 1911 to 671,659 in 1941;[45] this was an increase of 193 per cent as compared to the overall population growth over the period of only 44 per cent. The main source of this increase was rural–urban migration which colonial statistics – ever out to prove that the countryside was a place of unassailable stability – never quite came to terms with.[46] Most of the new inhabitants of Lahore appear to have come from the districts of Central Punjab, but some long-distance migration also existed.[47] The population increase has implications for middle-class development. Unlike in mill towns such as Cawnpore or Bombay, Lahore had little large-scale industry that could account for the absorption of so

many migrants; and there were no pre-established patterns of labour recruitment. Many of the new Lahorites must have gone into the so-called 'informal sector', but a significant number appear to have joined the public and service sectors that formed the backbone of the urban economy.

The occupational tables in the 1931 Census reveal a city with a large number of people potentially engaged in some form of 'middle-class' employment, although, in good colonial fashion, the Census itself was not designed to pick up class differentiations.[48] Fourteen per cent of all Lahoris were engaged in 'trade' – a figure that included bank employees, shopkeepers as well as street hawkers; 13 per cent worked in public administration (including the military, the police, the municipality and the provincial government), a further 13 per cent were 'people living off their income', which indicates that they were absentee landlords with some unspecified supplementary occupation in the city; finally 16 per cent were classed as being in the 'transport sector' – a category comprising labouring jobs such as engineering workers and cart men, but also a significant white collar segment. Although it is hard to impute the size of the middle class in any precise manner from such data, it appears possible to estimate that anything between one-fifth and one-quarter of the urban population – perhaps something like 150,000 people in 1941 – could be included in a middle-class bracket.

The evidence of life histories gives a good indication of what had happened: the sons of small and medium landowners and village commercial men made use of new educational opportunities provided by religious reform associations and missionary village schools. When they had the option of continuing higher education, they had to move to the provincial capital where the best boarding schools and colleges were located. Their further career choices often kept them in the city; some became bankers and insurance salesmen, others lawyers and yet others political activists and journalists. Life in the 'Paris of the East' – as Lahore was fondly known during the interwar period – must have had its own attractions, even when jobs were not immediately forthcoming.[49] There was a similar movement to the city from a rural artisan background; and although more 'working class' than 'middle class' in their family origins, some of these migrants seemed to have been able to establish an often precarious petty bourgeois existence in the city. A government survey conducted in 1940, for instance, interviewed an erstwhile worker in an iron foundry who over the course of a few years ran a soap and hosiery business, then opened a sweet shop and later took to selling books.[50] Some of these activities got very close to the entrepreneurial activities of the less fortunate sons of more well-to-do families, who went into self-employed manufacturing such as soap making, into low-brow journalism and into the ever expanding medical sector.[51] Other family histories demonstrate successful upward social mobility from bazaar artisan production to the highest echelons of government employment. The family of Sufi Pir Baksh – whose fortunes will be cited at various points in this book – rose from leather goods and box makers in the Shehranwala neighbourhood of Lahore in the 1870s to senior Indian Civil Service officers, doctors and educationists by the middle of the twentieth century.[52]

Colonial social science had no inclination to register the emergence of a middle-class constituency until the crisis years of the 1940s. The reason was simple: it was still possible and politically convenient to see this new social segment as fully incorporated into the system of patronage networks. Such reasoning easily suggested itself in the case of rural–urban migrants – both well to do and poor – who could be assumed to remain somehow connected to the tribal and caste politics that dominated the places they had come from. Questions about the impact of urban life on such pre-existing structures were conveniently ignored. As far as city-born people were concerned, colonial sociology tried to replicate a similar picture of a stable mosaic society by emphasizing so-called '*birardari*' (lit. 'brotherhood') linkages. Lahore Muslim politics, for instance, was explained as the factional rivalry between a 'Kashmiri' and an 'Arain' *biradari*. Such networks did in fact exist amongst all religious groups, often in an institutionalized form complete with *biradari* associations and *biradari* newspapers. But as Ravinder Kumar has pointed out in the case of the 1919 anti-Rowlatt Act demonstrations, and David Gilmartin for the Shahidganj agitation of the 1930s, such patronage models assume far too much control of big men over their followers.[53] There was no guarantee that *biradaris* would actually act as patronage networks, while a substantial part of the city population was never part of such networks in the first place.

Colonial observers assumed that loyalty to patronage networks was the result of unchanging ties of caste and tribe; but it is much more likely that patronage was powerful only as long as it actually delivered the goods for those who participated in it. The economic situation of the 1930s and the 1940s placed severe limitations on the ability of patrons to meet expectations. After the First World War, the political economy of the Raj imposed an ever-extending burden on the finances of the Government of India; the result was retrenchment in the government sector – one of the key areas of middle-class employment. Educated unemployment had been a problem in India for some time, but became especially severe after the shock of the Great Depression.[54] Other typically patronage-based sectors of the labour market were badly hit, too. In Lahore alone, 2,000 jobs were lost in government engineering establishments in 1930.[55] It took more than four years to regain pre-slump employment levels. Under such circumstances, even connections to powerful men of interest would not necessarily secure jobs for clients, which must have thrown the utility of patronage into doubt.

Further problems arose during the Second World War, when high inflation was accompanied by a severe shortage of goods of daily consumption. Salaries lagged far behind the rise of prices, a problem that was only partly overcome by ever-increasing dearness allowances. By 1942, prices for essential commodities had risen to such astronomical levels that kerosene, woollen blankets, cotton cloth and grain were pushed beyond the reach of the common consumer.[56] The powerful 'men of influence' at the helm of the politics of interest often made substantial profits from the situation. The hike in prices benefited many of them directly because it meant increased income from the sale of essential agricultural

commodities. In stark contrast to the members of the middle-class milieu, both Unionist grandees and loyalist Hindu trading families remembered the 1940s as a 'golden age'.[57]

During the early 1940s, rationing of essential commodities had to be introduced, and, in some localities, remained in place for over a decade. In the first instance, this could only strengthen the power of patronage politics, as, under the new circumstances, one needed *sifarish* ('connections') not only to get access to jobs and scholarships, but also to procure items such as kerosene and flour. But such heightened forms of dependency on 'big men' also brought patron–client relationships to breaking point. Comprehensive denunciations – such as the Punjab Muslim League election promise to end the 'connections' – economy altogether[58] – remained rare. For the most part, disaffection remained at the level of moral indignation against 'corruption'. Although the patronage networks involved in illegal activities sometimes cut across religious loyalties[59], there was a widespread tendency to see shortages as the consequence of religious favouritism.[60] When the chips were down, the political economy of favour was only denounced as far as it pertained to the activities of political rivals, not when it came to one's own patrons. Conditions of hardship had the potential of driving a wedge between the big men at the top of linkages of patronage and those further down the chain of allocation, but the prevailing politics of interest did not allow disaffection to grow into a politically relevant middle-class consciousness.

The emphasis that the Cambridge historians placed on patronage politics does not mean that middle-class identity never mattered in Indian politics, but simply that it did not matter enough to upset the political science of interest that the colonial state used in order to keep India under control. It is important for our understanding of the politics of self-expression not to erase class in favour of patronage or patronage in favour of class; the political space we seek to understand was shaped by the simultaneous impossibility and presence of class. Self-expressionism was an ideological vehicle of middle-class consciousness, but not one that was destined to lead to a collective will to capture state power. As we shall see, the only way that such a consciousness could exist at all was through the outright denial of political and societal reality. Self-expressionism was an unhappy consciousness that lived forever in the shadows of its own unreality. To drag self-expressionism to the light – by unmasking it as the successful ideological cover for something altogether more rational – is to erase all the features that made it most distinctive: the sense of fear and loathing; the opposition to doing politics; the celebration of not being realistic; the employment of political categories such as 'community' and 'state' in ways that radically undermined their conventional meaning.

The identification of self-expressionism as a middle-class politics of the marginalized accounts for the geographical regions it thrived in, and for the time periods when it was most pronounced. The development of a middle-class milieu was most advanced in those areas of India where the main administrative and commercial institutions of the colonial regime were located: in Bengal and

Bombay. These were also the areas where Congress stakeholder nationalism was weakest, which was reflected in the proliferation of 'extremist' or 'terrorist' forms of political agitation right from the start of the twentieth century.[61] Two of the 'prophets' of self-expressionism who were to receive a great deal of attention amongst the Urdu middle-class milieu – Subhas Chandra Bose and V.D. Savarkar – came from these regions. Far more important for the remit of this book was the province of Punjab, however. It was a relative latecomer in terms of urbanization and middle-class development, but this is precisely the reason why self-expressionism could become so widespread. One of the fastest expanding and most modernized middle-class segments in India was pitted against a form of the politics of interest that was particularly impenetrable. The situation in the UP, home to a much smaller and less dynamic Urdu middle-class milieu, was different. Here it was mainly middle-class Muslims who found themselves progressively excluded from an emerging Congress Raj, while at the same time being deserted by their erstwhile patrons amongst the landowning elite.

Self-expressionist modes of political thinking and action flourished throughout the late colonial period, but some important points of particular concentration can be identified: the aftermath of the Khilafat/Non-Cooperation movement when ideological politics appeared defeated, while elite interests enjoyed a period of renewed security under the system of 'dyarchy'; most of the 1930s, when particularly in the Punjab there seemed little resonance of the resurgent mood of mass agitation prevalent elsewhere in India and finally, the time of the Second World War, when apocalyptic fears for the future dominated the scene, and when middle-class Muslims in particular, felt that their burning desire for empowerment was running up against a stonewall of established facts.

Last but by no means least, there was a strong generational element in the politics of self-expression. Wherever it flourished, it flourished predominantly amongst the young of all religious backgrounds. They were enthused by a culture of youth empowerment – brought about partly by nationalism, partly by world-wide cultural developments – and found their desires for change frustrated in a web of social and political obligations. They expected self-fulfilment and resented their continuing dependency on patronage networks run by elders. Self-expressionism gave them a chance of not having to 'get real' in the restrictive sense that their parents and social power holders demanded.

## Prophecies of self-expression

Although some of its ideological tropes had precursors in the extremist nationalism of the 1910s and the pathos of pan-Islamism, self-expressionism emerged as a distinct ideological culture in the climate of despair that followed the defeat of the Khilafat/Non-Cooperation movement. As the consciousness of a marginalized and disoriented middle class, self-expressionism could not be born out of the experience of collective action, or rely on long-standing political traditions. The new political culture appeared in the political landscape like a voice descending from

a higher vantage point where a radically new future was visible. Self-expressionism was the vision of egotistical ideologues who assumed the airs of political prophets. They believed that they could save their community or nation in times of extreme difficulty through the power of words; of admonishment and castigation, as well as of exhortation and confidence building.

The following two sections provide a thematic overview of the respective contributions of three prophets of self-expression: Subhas Chandra Bose, V.D. Savarkar and Inayatullah Khan 'Mashriqi'. The first two are widely known and come from areas outside the Urdu middle-class milieu. They nevertheless deserve attention because both Bose's and Savarkar's arguments were enthusiastically received in Urdu middle-class circles and adopted in some of the local articulations of self-expressionist anti-societalism discussed later in this chapter and book. The work of the three thinkers marks a thematic progression that defines the discursive contours of the politics of self-expression. Bose combined a romantic notion of self-expression with a celebration of youth and a somewhat optimistic advocacy of militarism. Savarkar approached the problematic of self-expression from a much more pessimistic and apocalyptic angle, identifying the state of war as a definitive framework of legitimate politics. 'Mashriqi', finally, translated apocalyptic militarism into a sustained and overt attack on society and societal politics.

Subhas Chandra Bose (1897–1945) was the most high-profile Congress ideologue to openly reject Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi's homespun vision of Indian nationalism. Contrary to the latter's notions of non-violence, Bose thought that military insurrection could be a legitimate instrument of politics. In contrast to Gandhi's scepticism about large-scale modernization, he spoke a political language eclectically borrowing from various forms of twentieth-century statism. His social background was upper middle class, and he was a Calcuttan, with connections to the loyalist Hindu elite. Politically, Bose's family had long been involved in the affairs of their city and province, but without possessing any clear independent power base or institutionalized mass support.[62] Subhas Chandra Bose reached his political high-water mark in 1939, when he managed to secure his re-election as Congress president against the Mahatma's chosen candidate. His victory did not last, however. Quickly outmanoeuvred by Gandhi and deserted by his erstwhile friends on the nationalist 'Left', Bose was expelled from the Congress altogether. His way out of the political wilderness led him to Britain's global enemies, first to Nazi Germany, then to Japan, where he came to lead a military force allied to the Axis powers, the Indian National Army (INA). Although limited in their actual military efficacy, the INA became a source of inspiration for many Indians. When some of its officers and men were tried by the victorious British in 1946, Bose's erstwhile enemies in the Congress rushed to their legal defence in order to appropriate a share of Bose's reflected glory.[63] The man himself had died in a plane crash on Taiwan in 1945.[64]

What matters in the present context is not Bose himself, but how a self-expressionist paradigm of politics emerged in his writings and speeches of

the late 1920s that evoked strong resonances amongst members of the Urdu middle-class milieu. In his first extensive programmatic statement – his address to the Maharashtra Provincial Conference in Poona of 1928 – Bose offered a rejection of Gandhi's 'constructive programme' which rested on the idea that – after the temporary defeat of mass mobilization – India's freedom had to be advanced through various forms of social work in the local context. Bose agreed that political organization alone was not enough to achieve self-rule. His own recipe focused not on concrete measures at the grass-roots level, however, but on a somewhat nebulous (and very middle-class) notion of meta-physical self-awakening. This enabled him to be at once much more radical than Gandhi – calling for an uncompromising fight for independence – and at the same time, entirely opaque about what concrete actions this radical politics should actually entail. It is significant that Bose had experienced several years of harsh imprisonment in a Burmese penal colony before formulating his political programme. Much like Immanuel Kant, the thinker 'bound in a nutshell, and counting himself king of infinite space',[65] Bose was condemned to political inaction and had to come to terms, for the time being, with colonial repression remaining victorious. At the same time he was left to defend the freedom of his soul through unhindered introspection.

For Bose nationalism was much more than politics as defined by the allocation of resources under certain regimes of government; nationalism was the means of existential salvation, both for the individual and the collective. He said: 'Nationalism in India has instilled into us truthfulness, honesty, manliness and the spirit of service and sacrifice. What is more it has roused the creative faculties which for centuries had been lying dormant in our people…'[66] 'Creative faculties' refer to an edifice of spiritual–philosophical ideas influenced by the Bengali radical Aurobindo Ghosh, the Hindu reformer Swami Vivekananda as well as by ideas borrowed from Bergson and Nietzsche.[67]

At the core of this worldview stood the belief in the historical unfolding of an inherent national spiritual essence. Bose stated in 1929 when speaking to students,

> Every single nation or individual has got a special trait or ideal of his own. He shapes his life in accordance with that ideal. It becomes the sole object of life to realize that ideal as fully as possible. And minus that ideal his life becomes absolutely meaningless and unnecessary. Just as in the case of the individual the pursuit of an ideal continues through long years, so also in the case of the nation it works from generation to generation. (…) [this ideal] has got speed, locomotion and life-giving power.[68]

This idealist nationalism is self-consciously unconcerned with society as an epistemological space. It moves between three extra-societal emplacements of argument: the self-contained individual as micro-carrier of a spiritual essence; the

self-confined nation as macro-carrier of the same essence; and world history as the backdrop which validates the process of spiritual unfolding by witnessing it. Because politics is about the unfolding of an inherent essence over generations, youth is the harbinger of the new and the morally superior. In a significant passage from his 1928 Address, Bose exclaimed:

> The youth of this age have become self-conscious; they have been inspired by an ideal and are anxious to follow the call of their *inner* nature and fulfil their *destiny*. The movement is the *spontaneous self-expression of the national soul*, and on the course of this movement depends the nation's future.[69]

This movement of self-expression is driven by an inherent will to freedom that unlike concrete social work or, for that matter, any politics focused on matters of interest, can never be defeated; for unlike material interests, the entirely abstract goal of total salvation could never be negotiated or watered down by compromise. For Bose 'Swaraj [self-rule/independence] and Swaraj alone is the sovereign remedy for all our ills. And the only criterion of our fitness for Swaraj is the will to be free.'[70] Freedom in Bose's parlance was much more than political emancipation; it was a comprehensive liberation from all shackles psychological, social, economic and personal; a state of bliss only comparable to intoxication. In a speech in 1929, Bose explained that

> life has but one purpose, *freedom from bondage of every kind*. Hunger after freedom is the song of the soul – and *the very first cry of the new-born baby* is a cry of revolt against the bondage in which it finds itself.[71]

In other words, the only true form of humanity is humanity before its submission to the tyranny of society, the moment of birth.

Bose's introspective idealism was *extra*-societal, but not necessarily *anti*-societal. Although he rejected constructive work, he always strongly advocated the organization and politicization of women and young people, as well as any measures that would alleviate the bad living conditions of workers and peasants.[72] But it is important to note that these were not goals in themselves, but preliminaries. Social divisions and backwardness of any kind were obstacles for the coming into its own of the national soul. A politics based solely on world history, individuals and national collectives was only possible once anything undermining this monadic imagination had been overcome. Bose saw this process of overcoming as a positive and constructive one, but nevertheless hoped that society was eventually going to wither away.

Subhas Chandra Bose shared the admiration for all things military that was so typical for the prophets of self-expression. Like Gandhi at the time, and Jinnah in later decades, Bose liked to compare an organized nationalist movement to an army. Such metaphors quickly became commonplace in Congress propaganda.

The Urdu organizing song *Kar raha Manchester ke qil$^{c}$e mismar Gandhi he* (Gandhi is demolishing Imperialism – 'the castle of Manchester'), for instance, portrayed Gandhi as the 'Commander-in-Chief' of the 'national' Indian army, which fights unarmed and with non-violence against the 'armed army' of Imperialism.[73]

Like many other political movements at the time, the Congress formed its own para-military organizations, mimicking and simultaneously subverting the military might of British Imperialism. At the Calcutta Congress of 1928, Bose was acting as the 'general-officer-commanding' of a 2,000 strong corps of Congress volunteers, which he divided into '(a) Bicycle Division, (b) Motorcycle Division,[74] (c) Cavalry Division, (d) Band Division, (e) Coded Messages Division'. He marched these troops along to the proceedings, riding in front of them on a brown horse like a general.[75] Similar Congress paramilitary units existed under various names in the geographic areas of the Urdu middle-class milieu.[76]

By joining a military formation the middle-class individual left a world of petty everyday concerns and entered into a purified and empowered state in which he (for Bose emphatically also she) could play their historical role as vessels of the national soul. The juxtaposition between the life in society and the superior life in uniform comes out clearly in Bose's recollections of his own first encounters with the military. In his unfinished autobiography (mostly written during the mid-1930s) he explained how he first found 'positive pleasure' in 'soldiering':[77]

> Life was humdrum in College . . . but I soon found something to add some spice to my daily life. The Government had agreed to start a University unit in the India Defence Force . . . (. . .) I was not disappointed . . . . We had camp life for four months and enjoyed it thoroughly. (. . .) What a change it was from sitting at the feet of anchorites to obtain knowledge about God, to standing with a rifle on my shoulder taking orders from a British army officer! We did not see any active service nor did we have any real adventure. (. . .) Towards the end of our training we had mock-fights in the dark which were interesting and exciting.[78]

Bose was honest enough to admit that it was not so much the will to learn the skills for national liberation, but plain boredom coupled with youthful restlessness that made the army so attractive. This is important, because it lends a particular gloss to the larger moral story about national awakening that is told with the help of this episode. Bose's overt political point was that military training could generate self-respect and dignity: the recruits looked hopeless when they assembled on the Calcutta Maidan for the first time; they wore a variety of different clothes; some were 'comic figures' only fit for the 'awkward squad'; and then under the impact of drill and uniform they emerge as tidy and disciplined solders who suddenly enjoyed the same rights as the colonialists themselves.[79] But national self-expression was about more than political liberation, even about

more than national purification and discipline; it was about leading a more fulfilled and a more interesting life than middle-class existence commonly allowed. The boundaries between life and political activity had become so blurred in this quest as to make the distinction obsolete. The political was personal and the personal was political.

Bose emphasized this very message when he came to speak to members of the Urdu middle-class milieu. According to colonial observers, this made him extremely popular particularly amongst college students in the Punjab.[80] When the 'terrorist' movement was revived in the late 1920s by small cells of Bengali and Punjabi youngsters – most famous the 'martyrs' Bhagat Singh, Sukhdev Singh, Raj Guru and Jatin Das. Sympathetic organizations above- and underground – such as the Hindustan Socialist Republican Army and the All India Naujawan Bharat Sabha – drew much of their ideological inspiration from Bose.[81]

By most accounts, Bose's militarism remained relatively mild. Despite his political association with Nazi Germany, he always kept his distance to what he recognized as a deeply racist regime.[82] Unlike Savarkar and Mashriqi, Bose did actually fight a proper military campaign and commanded a real army, but his commitment to the military way of life as a goal in its own right was arguably less existentialist than was the case with other prophets of self-expression. Furthermore, Bose's notion of self-expression maintained a certain degree of pluralism that other ideologues would not tolerate. In one of his programmatic speeches Bose maintained that 'the unfoldment [*sic*] of both the individual and the nation has to be achieved through… diversity, through the "many" '.[83] What he had in mind specifically was religious pluralism, a non-sectarian commitment to Muslim–Hindu harmony.

## Fascism's fellow travellers

Most Hindu (and Muslim) proponents of the politics of self-expression were of the opposite view. For them, the self-expression of a national soul could ever only mean a national soul defined by membership in a particular religious community. There were several late nineteenth-century authors for whom Indian patriotism had a distinctly anti-Muslim (and anti-Christian) flavour. Best known perhaps, was the Bengali literato, Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay and his novel *Ananda Math* (1894), which equates nationalism with love for 'Mother India' as a Hindu deity. In the North Indian context, equivalent forms of Hindu proto-nationalism were expounded by a range of religious reform movements, caste associations and single-issue pressure groups working for cow protection and the advancement of Hindi over Urdu.[84] (Ironically, the operational language of such groups often remained Urdu.) By far the most important voice in this milieu was the Arya Samaj, a radical reformist Hindu 'denomination' founded in 1875 by the Gujarati preacher Swami Dayananda Saraswati. Dayananda and his followers rejected the various 'orthodox' forms of Hinduism then in existence, and advocated a strictly scripturalist, monotheistic and caste-less faith. *Arya Dharam* – as the new religion

was called – was obsessed with 'academic' history rather than myth, with rational explanation and literal study rather than emotion and ritual. The foundation of educational institutions with the help of modern techniques of fund raising was one of the Samaj's earliest and foremost concerns. This middle-class orientation explains why Dayananda's message did not find many followers in his native Gujarat, but flourished on immediate impact in the dynamic and prosperous cities of Punjab, in Delhi and the Western towns of UP, where an Urdu-using professional milieu was beginning to emerge at exactly this time.[85]

The Arya Samaj contributed to the development of Hindu nationalism in several ways. As a new and self-consciously austere religion that had to establish itself in a world of religious pluralism, Dayananda's faith was right from the start extremely confrontational. It rejected most aspects of Hindu social and cultural life as it was then known, particularly the expression of personal devotion to a specific deity (*bhakti*) through regular worship in temple and home (*puja*).[86] In consequence, Arya identity had few positive features to emotionally sustain its adherents from the inside, as it were, and depended more than other religious identities on juxtaposition to a contrasting 'other'. Debating contests (*mubahassa*) with orthodox Hinduism, Christian missionaries and the new proselytizing Islam of the Ahmadiyya Sect became a central aspect of Arya religious life. Its foundational text, Dayananda's *Satyarth Prakash*, consists largely of a blow-by-blow 'debunking' of other religious traditions. Major Arya periodicals such as the *Arya Musafir* devoted many pages to allegedly 'neutral' and 'scientific' disputations with Muslim clerics that always had the same outcome: Islam was proven to be irrational, and whatever good the reader may have found in it, was identified as an unacknowledged borrowing from older Indian traditions.[87] Many new members of the Samaj attributed their conversion to the empowering and eye-opening experience of 'defeating' adherents of other religions in such encounters.[88] While this made anti-Muslim sentiment a central plank of neo-Hindu identity, the Arya Samaj also opened up the depths of Indian history for perusal for nationalist historiographies. By harking back to the 'golden age' of the Vedas – the most ancient of Hindu scriptures – the Aryas popularized a sense of Indian-ness that was allegedly older and more authentic than the Indian-ness of the perceived Muslim invaders.[89]

Politically, this new Hindu nationalism was not immediately translated into a politics of self-expression. For much of the period between the 1890s and the end of the First World War, it was urban Hindu men of interest who pursued religious revivalism in the context of local pressure groups with clear concrete aims and interests. From 1915 onwards, they were united under the umbrella of the Hindu Sabha. Later closely associated with a radical self-expressionist stance under the new name of Hindu *Maha*sabha, this organization had originally a very mixed constituency stretching from loyalists such as C.Y. Chintamani and Raja Narendranath to more principled Indian nationalists such as Lala Lajpat Rai, Motilal Nehru and Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviyya. Most of these assorted upper-middle-class notables and professional men had strong vested interests and were almost by definition disinclined towards a politics of self-expression. Their main political

problem was disunity within the Hindu religious constituency, due to religious (e.g. Arya Samaj vs 'orthodox' Hindu), personal and regional differences.[90]

V.D. Savarkar's *Hindutva: Who is a Hindu?* published in 1923,[91] advocated an altogether more apocalyptic and anti-societal vision of politics. In his youth Savarkar (1883–1966), a British-educated lawyer from Bhagpur (near Nashik, Bombay Presidency), had been part of the 'extremist' and 'terrorist' wing of Indian nationalism. This landed him in prison for extended periods of time. In consequence, he had no chance to participate in the wave of mass mobilization of the early 1920s, and more than any other prophet of self-expression was condemned to an 'arm-chair' (minus the comfort) view of politics. Legend has it that it was during his long incarceration on the Andaman Islands – in around 1917 – that he began to inscribe on the wall of his cell what was to become one of the most influential political texts of modern Indian history.[92] The tract was soon recognized as the foundation of militant Hindu nationalism. It contains the definition of the term '*Hindutva*' – 'Hindu-ness' which became the central ideological plank of what is now commonly called the 'Sangh Parivar', an ideological 'family' of organizations on the Hindu Far Right. Apart from the Hindu Mahasabha that Savarkar himself came to dominate during the late 1930s, the most important component of the Parivar has been the Rashtriyya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS). This was a paramilitary organization founded by another radical Marathi speaker, Keshav Baliram Hedgewar in 1925 – shortly after and inspired by the publication of *Hindutva*.

RSS ideology rests on the assumption that only militarization could ensure the survival of Hinduism in a global universe of never ending battle. Members of the Sangh were ordered according to military ranks and expected to participate in paramilitary drill exercises on a regular basis. Until today their trademark dress code consists of Khaki shorts and shirt, mimicking British colonial army uniforms.[93] Like the Hindu Mahasabha, the RSS had a lukewarm relationship with the Indian nationalist movement, although there is no doubt that many Congress members – particularly from the North Indian middle-class milieu – entertained much sympathy for radical Hindu nationalism. UP Congressman Purushottam Das Tandon, for instance, created his own RSS-inspired Hindu defence corps, the Hind Rakshak Dal in the 1940s.[94] Heightened religious conflict in the decade before Partition and the creation of similar paramilitary movements amongst other political and religious groups led to a steady rise in RSS membership. This applied especially to the Urdu-using Hindu middle-class milieu.[95] From 1,530 members in 1940, the Punjab branch of the Sangh rose steadily to 22,000 members in 1946[96] and 46,000 in 1947.[97] In 1942 one Ram Rakha Mal of Lahore, who acted as a police informer, boasted that the city RSS unit had become the third important in India (after Bombay and Delhi) in terms of subscriptions and had accumulated a formidable cache of weapons.[98] As Partition itself approached, Hedgewar's successor Golwalkar inspected no less than 25,000 volunteers during his visit to Lahore and collected two lakh (200,000) rupees in donations.

Back in the 1920s, Savarkar's *Hindutva: Who is a Hindu?* was eagerly received by many Mahasabha men in North West India. Lala Lajpat Rai from the Punjab

and Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviyya from UP both warmly welcomed the pamphlet.[99] Swami Shraddhanand, radical Punjabi Arya Samajist, activist in the aggressive *shuddhi* movement and founder of the influential Urdu daily *Tej* was outright ecstatic about it. He exclaimed: 'It must have been one of those Vaidic dawns indeed which inspired our Seers with new truths, that revealed to the author of "Hindutva" this Mantra . . . this definition of Hindutva!!'[100] Such strong endorsements have to be seen in the context of the general middle-class sense of disorientation of the time. Although the Non-Cooperation/Khilafat movement demonstrated the power of mass mobilization – in particular *Muslim* mass mobilization potentially hostile to the interests of the Hindu elite – the following decade did not change affairs all that much in terms of an immediate politics of interest. In Punjab, the system of dyarchy offered relatively comfortable and well-established positions to those Mahasabha men willing to remain loyalist, while in UP there were some real gains in terms of the promotion of Hindi and other causes of vital interest. But as Shraddhanand's invocation of prophecy indicates, there was a sense that something fundamental *had* changed; something that Savarkar was able to articulate and to translate into a new political orientation.

What matters here is not so much the construction of '*Hindutva*', which has attracted substantial interest elsewhere,[101] but Savarkar's understanding of politics. His ultimate aim, stated in lofty phrases in the foreword of *Hindutva: Who is a Hindu?* is a state of bliss for all of mankind:

> the removal of (. . .) stress and strife, of those bickerings and bloodsheds, so that man may be drawn towards man because he is man, the child of that our common father God – and nursed at the breast of this our common mother – Earth – and wield humanity in a World-commonwealth.[102]

Although clearly intended to give his ideas a humanist gloss, this formulation already points to the darker side of Savarkar's political ideals. The future is not couched in terms of a perfect society, but in terms of a reversal back to nature; all humans are children of one cosmic family; they are biological rather than cultural or social beings. By implication all the negatives in the quote – stress, strife, etc. – are associated with nature's 'other', society.

The aim of doing away with evil is expressed in explicitly social-Darwinist language:

> the brilliance of this ultimate hope ought not to dazzle our eyes into blindness towards the solid and imminent fact that men and groups, and races in the process to consolidation into larger social units, have, under the stern law of nature, to get forged into that large existence on the anvil of war through struggle and sacrifice. Those alone who can stand this fierce ordeal will prove their fitness, not only the moral but even the physical fitness, that entitles races and types to survive in this world.[103]

Savarkar presents, with an undertone of feigned regret and with reference to historical and biological necessity, what he really regards as wholly desirable and positive. Paradoxically, it is the hardship and deprivation of conflict itself that are meant to lead humankind into a blissful post-societal state from which the very same conditions will be absent. War is positive because it creates a new quasi-biological sense of belonging. Savarkar argues that only attacks by a mortal enemy – like Mahmud of Ghazna's eleventh-century incursion into North India – can evoke the feeling of a togetherness that the 'Hindu race' requires to survive.[104] Only war demonstrates that a common Hindu identity does indeed exist across the vast expanse of the subcontinent:

> The fall of Prithviraj is bewailed in Bengal; the martyred sons of Govindsing in Maharashtra. An Arya Samaj historian in the extreme North feels that Harihar and Bukka of the extreme South fought for him, and a Sanatanist historian in the extreme south feels that Guru Tejbahadur died for him.[105]

Mystical connections are seen as capable of overcoming the ground realities of colonial India, most importantly the fact that in the real world closer social ties existed between the people of different religions living in one locality than between people that shared some (fairly vague) form of religious discourse, but were separated by geographic, linguistic, economic and political distance. Savarkar's cherished identity could not grow out of the kind of social interaction that people across India experienced in their everyday lives. If *Hindutva* was not created in the space *between* people, it could only emerge, somewhat miraculously, from *within* each and every member of the new national-cum-racial community. Although Savarkar discusses some auxiliary factors in the development of a national identity – such as shared literature, festivals, customs and, in a revealingly de-socialized fashion, territory[106] – it is really the activation of an inherent emotional impulse that mattered. After asserting that Hindus can be of all sorts of religious beliefs, as well as atheists, Savarkar states

> We are (…) a born brotherhood. Nothing else counts, it is after all a question of heart. We *feel* that the same ancient blood that coursed through the veins of Rama and Krishna, Budh and Mahavir, [and] Nanak (…) courses throughout the Hindudom from vein to vein, pulsates from heart to heart. We *feel* we are a (…) race bound together by the dearest ties of blood – and therefore it must be so.[107]

In the final analysis, being a Hindu is a matter of ontological self-expression, of realizing and communicating a sense of being that cannot be described in social terms. This is clearly indicated by the choice of semi-biological metaphors, shared 'blood' and shared 'veins' that recur throughout Savarkar's text.[108] The Hindu nation is 'One Organic Social Being'[109], allegedly so rooted in the recesses of its members' selves that the many-faceted impact of cultural change – class

differentiation, Westernization, cross-religious communication – cannot question the basic commitment to it. If social or cultural factors are found valuable for the construction of this sense of being at all, they have to be located in a distant, quasi-biological past, because anything tangible about Hindu culture or religion is either not shared by all prospective members of the Hindu nation, or even worse, also shared by Muslim or Christian Indians who are forever outside it.

Savarkar seemed to realize that the short-circuiting of biologism and emotional voluntarism is prone to lead into contradictions that undermine the legitimacy of the proposed nationhood. If being a Hindu is all about expressing some mystical feeling, there is nothing to stop even a European woman like Sister Nivedita (alias Margaret Noble) to claim *Hindutva* on the ground that 'she felt like a Hindu', as Savarkar openly conceded.[110] At the same time, a similar avenue of identification had to be denied to Indian Muslims and Christians who were after all needed as existential opponents in the very battles that made *Hindutva* possible in the first place. Even the most patriotic and culturally Hindu-ized of Muslims, Savarkar is adamant at pointing out, can never qualify for *Hindutva* because of their inherent love for Arabia as a holy land.[111]

Without the immediate support of social reality, *Hindutva* was built on shaky foundations. This is why an agitated nervousness about possible treason was always present in Savarkar's tract.

> Those of you who in a suicidal fit try to cut off the most vital of those ties and dare to disown the name Hindu will find to their cost that in doing so they have cut themselves off from the very source of our racial Life and Strength[112]

The sage from Maharashtra threatened darkly. From an outside perspective, the act of treason entailed very little, not the severing of social relationships, nor the breaking of religious doctrines or taboos, but the simple disowning of a label. Moreover, for people who merely go about their daily lives under normal circumstances the loss of 'racial Life and Strength' is an empty threat. This is precisely why Savarkar had to idealize war and why the deliberate creation of conflict has been the only real sustenance of *Hindutva* identity. This is the heart of anti-societalism in Hindu nationalism. Only when the charade of a society at peace can be finally destroyed, will individuals be ripped out of the complex web of social relationships with people of various faiths and the existential feelings of friend and enemy be activated.

This differentiates *Hindutva* politics from the phenomenon of 'communalism' with which it is often confused by outside observers (but revealingly never by *Hindutva* nationalists themselves). Savarkar writes somewhat politely:

> The harm that a special and communal representation does is never so great as the harm done by the attitude of racial aloofness. Let the Sikhs, the Jains, the Lingayats, the non-Brahmins and even, for the matter of

> that, Brahmins press and fight for the right of special and communal representation, if they honestly look upon it as indispensable for their communal growth. (. . .) They could do that without refusing to get fused into a larger whole and incorporated into the wider generalization of Hindutva.[113]

For reasons of political convenience the politicians of self-expression were often unable to condemn 'communalism' outright; here Savarkar suggests a subordination to *Hindutva*, instead. But there is no doubt that the representation of sectarian, caste or ethnic interests is a potential problem that goes deeper than the obvious threat to national unity across caste and linguistic boundaries. Despite its uglier features, 'communal' advancement is a form of politics that is eminently societal in the sense that it assumes the existence of a shared arena in which different interconnected groups compete for resources, such as educational funding, government jobs, separate or joint electorates etc. This is competition with rules and for concrete aims, in which communication, negotiation and compromise are necessary and possible. If recognition is at stake in the world of communalism, it is not recognition by some nebulous transcendental being, but by government bodies and political regimes. All this is clearly different from the universe of total conflict without aims or rules beyond 'survival of the fittest', which alone can enforce the self-expression of a de-socialized identity such as *Hindutva*.

Savarkar's vision of the world and his sense of what it means to be a Hindu can only really exist in what his contemporary, the German political theorist Carl Schmitt has called '*ausnahmezustand*' – an exceptional state of being in which everybody recognizes who is collective friend or collective foe with such an intensity that all other considerations become mute.[114] For both men, war was the paradigm of politics *par excellence*. A world without war is a world without politics, because – according to the Nazi sympathizer Schmitt – 'there would not be a meaningful antithesis whereby men could be required to sacrifice life, authorized to shed blood, and kill other human beings'.[115] This is the very stuff that Savarkar's dreams were made of; his entire vision of what it meant to be anything in the world depended on feelings aroused by existential conflict.

The anti-societal orientation of this political vision was expressed most clearly and overtly in the thought of another political prophet who embarked on his mission in the mid-1920s: Inyatullah Khan (1885–1965) alias 'Allama Mashriqi' ('The Sage of the East'). Born in the Punjab in a village near Amritsar, he was from a family of moderate wealth but high-status pretensions and a long history of service in the colonial government. Mashriqi himself received a scholarship to study in Cambridge and subsequently pursued a successful career as civil servant and headmaster in various colonial institutions in the North West of India.[116] Although the first volume of Mashriqi's self-acclaimed magnum opus *Al-Tazkira* was published as early as 1924,[117] his political career only really took off after his retirement from colonial service, with the foundation of the Khaksar paramilitary

organization in 1930. Despite his highbrow educational background, most of Inayatullah Khan's prolific textual output was written in Urdu.

The Khaksar movement started off with only a few members in Punjab and Western UP, mostly from university-educated, lower-level salariat or artisan backgrounds. All members of the movement were required to participate in weekly exercises in uniform, involving paramilitary training and so-called 'social work' (more on this in Chapter 2). Mashriqi openly acknowledged his debt to foreign models, particularly the German SA and SS, but also the Czech Sokol.[118] The Khaksar trademark was the spade (*belcha*) which was used as a symbolic stand-in for a gun in parades, but also as a real weapon in street fights and as a tool. The first foray into all-India politics came in 1938, when Mashriqi sent batches of volunteers to the UP capital Lucknow where a longstanding dispute between the Sunni and Shia 'communities' had degenerated into a series of bloody riots. The stated aim of the Khaksar 'invasion' was to resolve what they saw as an internecine struggle between Muslims. If need be – Mashriqi announced publicly and with characteristic flourish – peace was to be restored by assassinating the most quarrelsome 'community leaders'. As the colonial authorities were quick to realize, the real aim of the invasion was to give the Khaksars an opportunity to impress small-town populations all over North India with paramilitary displays and processions and to provoke the government into repressive measures that would further enhance the movement's prestige.[119]

Although Mashriqi was arrested and his stand-off with both the sectarian leaders and the government came dangerously close to a farce, the Lucknow operation did have considerable success in making the Khaksars widely known. Rich businessmen began to join the movement and the geographic reach expanded to include units in Central India and Bengal.[120] Encouraged by all this, Mashriqi decided to embark on an even larger confrontation with Sir Sikandar Hayat Khan's government in Punjab, which would coincide with the famous 1940 All India Muslim League session in Lahore. Once again a strategy of deliberate confrontation with the authorities was adopted. Mashriqi made demands that were largely symbolic and guaranteed not to be met – the creation of a Khaksar corps in the British army and the provision of a Khaksar radio station.[121] He then issued an impossible ultimatum to the authorities and ordered his men to stage provocative demonstrations in streets and in mosques. The Lahore police responded with indiscriminate and lethal force, with thousands of Muslim League delegates from all over the country witnessing events. Several delegates gave damning eyewitness accounts of the 'massacre' to the press.[122] In sympathy and appreciation of Khaksar courage and sacrifice, Muslim children began to call themselves 'Khaksar'[123]. Preachers in mosques, students and the Muslim press all began to pay homage to Mashriqi and turned him, at least temporarily, into one of the most prominent (and most reviled from the Government point of view) Muslim leaders in India.[124]

Mashriqi's overall mission was very similar to Savarkar's. He too believed that a merciless battle for the survival of the fittest would ultimately lead to the

betterment of humankind in general; furthermore that his own nation, the worldwide community of Muslims (*ummat*), would have to get ready to secure its own existence in a terrifying world of never-ending warfare. There is some difference in emphasis between the two writers, however. For both, the unity of their respective religious nations was of paramount importance and in neither case was this unity uncontested. But for Savarkar's Hinduism the creation of unity required a whole new theoretical approach to the very question of 'Who is a Hindu?' Mashriqi, in contrast, could take at least a minimal sense of Muslim-ness for granted. Whereas the anti-social thrust of *Who is a Hindu?* is often hidden behind questions of boundary definition, Mashriqi was much more open about the destruction of society as a key objective in his formulation of the politics of self-expression.

Like Savarkar and other RSS ideologues,[125] Mashriqi was deeply influenced by radical nationalisms in Europe, particularly by German National Socialism. He claimed to have met Hitler personally[126] and came to share the typical Nazi distaste for the world of the everyday. After arriving in Germany in 1926, Mashriqi was deeply shocked that such a model of a warlike nation could have sunk so low as to detest militarism and war altogether. Wherever he went – as he wrote in his 1935 introduction to an edited and abridged Urdu translation of Hitler's *Mein Kampf* – people were talking about 'peace and prosperity'; instead of taking the fanatical pride in the Kaiser that he had encountered just before the outbreak of the First World War.[127] He could not comprehend how the 'terrifying world-conquering power of the German nation' could be rejected in favour of a comfortable petty life. With particular ire he recalled a housewife who rejected war on the grounds that she could get no sugar and meat for her family.[128]

According to Mashriqi, God's greatest and most important command, as revealed and elaborated in the *Qur'an*, is the willingness to endure hardship in pursuit of military glory.[129] Assuming the role of a universal lawgiver for himself, Mashriqi formulated this idea in terms of 'Ten Principles' which later became the core ideology of the Khaksar movement. The first and most important (the others are all variations on industriousness, scientific curiosity and martial organization) is the age-old Islamic core doctrine of *tawhid*, or absolute belief in one God. We read in the introduction to *al-Tazkirah*

> Any person who did not maintain this Unity of Godhead in his mind for any length of time, who, in contravention to God's trouble-giving commandments accepted the ease-giving commandments of his wicked inner self, i.e. the Devil, who worshipped the idol of wealth, the idol of a comfortable house, the idol of wife and family, the idol of his personal desires and selfish passions, was, for a length of time an unbelieving person, an Infidel, a Kafir [heathen], a Mushrik [polytheist] in the terminology of the Quran.[130]

Mashriqi's programme was a sustained and radical attack on the world of the everyday which he saw as the main impediment to a martial identity.

Any attachment to things other than the grand battle for survival between nations and races was seen as an affront against Islam. The only true believer is one who is willing to sever all ties with society at large and ready to become a soldier. In a lengthy and programmatic article in *Al-Islah*, the Khaksar organ, Mashriqi argued that all the practical obligations of Islam were methods to increase the organizational and collective power of the Muslim community, thus giving rise to a 'magnificent strength'. It was exactly this strength that enabled the Muslim community to acquire political dominance, which in turn took care of all other aspects of life in the Muslim community and ordered them to best possible effect.[131]

As for most Muslims, Mashriqi's ideal was the earliest period of Islamic history. But what he cherished was not so much the sense of righteousness and correct guidance that came from close proximity to the Prophet, as the magnificent military exploits of the early Muslims, their '*forcefully* acquired imperial sovereignty'. He wrote in *al-Islah*,

> If our ancestors came to take possession of India after establishing their rule, having marched thousands of miles and having fought countless battles, if the Muslims of the first centuries [Muslim calendar] conquered 36 thousand [*sic*] cities and fortresses in twelve years, if Islam's first activists conquered without respite nine new cities and castles in one day, then there is a difference of day and night between their Islam and the Islam of today. Do you think that the conquest of states was possibly without relentless and unending action of hand and feet? Do you think that our forefathers could have conquered even the smallest of castles without heroism, fearlessness, complete comradely love and trust, complete obedience to their superiors, accomplished sword skill; without the readiness to travel thousands of miles on foot; without endurance in the face of hunger and thirst; without the burning wish to die and kill on the battlefield, in short without a readiness to live *a completely martial way of life*?[132]

In comparison to this lofty ideal, contemporary Muslim society was regarded as sick to the core, and as the following list demonstrates, it was again the institutions and practices of everyday life that were seen as the root causes of decay:

> Do you think that the Muslims of that glorious age had even a minute left to discuss some tract on the intricacies of religious doctrine or to found a school or [social reform] association? Or did the Arabs, when they brought the world to its knees, first study in some school or university? (…) Didn't they make it their day and night obsession to conquer lands for the glory of Allah, sword in hand, once they had fulfilled their religious obligations? Did they love their wives in such unhealthy ways as is the case today? Did their sons cling to the necks of their

> fathers as is common in every household nowadays? Did their business ventures, worth crores of Rupees, make these men as lazy and indolent as the income from a single grocery shop makes Muslims lazy and indolent today?[133]

Particularly pronounced was Mashriqi's antipathy towards the family – social institution *par excellence* and foundation stone of religious conservativism the world over – which he sees as the root cause of all evil. Following the previous quote Mashriqi described the lifestyle of the eighth-century Muslim scholar Malik b. Anas as an example that all Muslims should follow.[134] Malik's father is eulogized as a man who engaged in warfare far away from home for years on end and left the upbringing of his illustrious son to his wife. For Mashriqi this was not neglect, but the legitimate claiming of a space for self-fulfilment (albeit disguised as service for the nation). All three – father, mother, son – respectfully allow each other to pursue their own missions in life and each contribute in their own different ways to the success of Islam. For Mashriqi this is the ideal and in stark contrast to current practice: 'In the Muslim family of today, all members strangle each other with inappropriate love and end up crippled.'[135] If the members of a nation end up strangled by their daily entanglements and obligations, this can ultimately only lead to the death and decay of the nation as a whole. This is precisely why the Muslims of today are a 'dying' nation. Unlike other 'living nations' who follow God's eternal commands and nothing else, Muslims have chosen to love worldly things instead of God. The same idea is expressed in *al-Tazkira* in terms of the conventional Islamic charge against heathenism:

> . . . all else beside Him were idols, which, if worshipped by a nation for any length of time, would stunt its very vigour and suck its very life out of it in the shortest possible time and, would make it totally incapable of coping with the great struggle for existence which it has to face.[136]

The chief evil in this context is 'cash profit' and 'comfort in cash' which not only makes individuals lazy, but 'takes away the very life of Nations . . .'.[137] This is a metaphor only too well known from the context of European cultural pessimism; capitalism as the 'life-sucking' vampire that occurs both in Marx, and later, in an anti-Semitic context, in the discourse of the extreme Right. Behind a clear and unequivocal denigration of the concerns of the everyday, stood a principled rejection of capitalism. For Mashriqi, as for many other thinkers of his time, economics was a matter of co-ordinated planning, based on sound scientific principles, and aimed at securing collective rather than individual goals.

Mashriqi's radicalism came out most clearly in his willingness to push social-Darwinist lines of argument beyond the religiously acceptable. He made it very clear that sin and virtue have nothing to do with the correct observance of religious rules and regulations.[138] The value of an action was determined solely by its impact on the collective survival of the national group. As the following

quote demonstrates, this logic was taken to its ultimate conclusion – a complete inversion of Islamic identity:

> Mere ceremonial worship of a stone idol of a few minutes daily cannot make a nation infidel in the divine sense, as long as they keep the devil [defined as sloth and self interest] out of the door. Nay, a nation can be a real God-worshipper, while it formally worships idols; while a community of people who merely say that God is One may in reality and in deed be the greatest idol-worshipping nation that has ever existed on the face of the Earth.[139]

What he is saying here is that all those who believe themselves to be Muslims are not really Muslims at all, but infidels; while those who do not even officially profess Islam may actually be true Muslims. To make matters worse, he mentions *stone* idols, which is an allusion to Hinduism and Buddhism. Some Young Turk thinkers had re-labelled Buddhism as proto-Islam in appreciation of the Japanese military success against Russia in 1905.[140] But the idea that *Hindus* may actually be better Muslims than the Muslims themselves was an affront of almost unimaginable magnitude in the communalized context of colonial India. Behind such shock tactics stood, of course, the desire to restore Islam to its proper glory. There is little doubt that Mashriqi has his own religious community in mind when he proclaimed,

> A persistent application of, and action on these Ten Principles is the true significance of 'fitness' in the Darwinian [*sic*] principle of 'Survival of the Fittest', and a community of people which carries action on these lines to the very extremist limits has every right to remain a predominant race on this Earth forever, has claim to be the ruler of the world for all time. As soon as any or all of these qualities deteriorate in a nation, she begins to lose her right to remain and Fitter people may take her place automatically under the Law of Natural Selection.[141]

The motif of worship points to a crucial source of anti-societalism in the politics of self-expression: for Mashriqi both nations and individuals 'worship', and both can be guilty of the sin of *shirk*, or polytheism. This implies that nations and individuals are ontologically analogous. Both are seen as un-networked and un-connected monads in possession of some inherent essential being that had to be expressed. What is entirely ignored here is the ground *between* individuals that is society. By conceptually assimilating individuals to nations the impression is created that individuals like international bodies live in an empty, lawless and unregulated context. It is highly revealing that the rules constituting political ethics – for instance, the 'Ten Principles' of the Khaksar movement – were of such a nature that they could apply in equal measure to individuals and groups. Both had to toughen-up and be purified in order to survive in a universe ruled by survival of the fittest.

Mashriqi's attack on society was phrased in unequivocal terms and contained a range of radical ideas that his contemporaries found hard to stomach. Although he was clearly against self-fulfilment if understood as the pursuit of personal career options or personal wealth, the Khaksar founder was always ready to absolve his followers of conventional social duties in the name of national or racial interest. No institution of Islamic society remained outside the purview of condemnation. Mashriqi hated the religious establishment and their (in his eyes) hair-splitting attempts to bring Islamic doctrine in line with modern requirements. But he had as little time for Islamic mysticism or the many customs and traditions that formed the flesh and blood of Muslim community life. Festivals and traditional foods were all part of the devil of ease and distractions from war. Modernists like Sir Sayed Ahmad Khan and Muhammad Iqbal were also savagely criticized. In a manner which is at least surprising for a retired headmaster, Mashriqi declared that education was irrelevant for the supreme duty of military organization and the contemporary discussion about the merits of female education nothing more than a waste of time. Social reform was a futile exercise in association-mongering ('*anjumansazi*'), and literary activity an outburst of elegiac self-pity.[142]

Unsurprisingly, Mashriqi's hunger for all-out controversy ultimately undermined the considerable ideological clout that some of his ideas enjoyed in the Indian Muslim middle-class milieu. Unlike Savarkar, Mashriqi was not a good tactician ready to absorb prevailing political and religious norms under the umbrella of his own ideology. Despite their close resemblance in organizational set-up, ideological orientation and political style the subsequent histories of the two respective movements that the two men helped to found was radically different. After the Khaksars' 'Finest Hour' in 1940 the British security forces could make substantial dents into Khaksar influence by encouraging more orthodox voices to dismiss Mashriqi as a non-Muslim.[143] Jinnah's All India Muslim League – which Mashriqi bitterly opposed – managed to absorb many disgruntled Khaksar activists, bringing them back into the fold of acceptability, as it were, albeit without much moderating their militarist opinions. From more than 5,000 members in 1939,[144] the membership of the movement declined to 600 in 1946,[145] and reached near extinction in 1947. Although the Khaksars maintained a certain presence in the United Provinces after Partition, it became all but eclipsed in Pakistan where Mashriqi continued to live until his death. The Sangh Parivar, meanwhile, easily survived a phase of government repression after Gandhi's assassination in 1948, has been going from strength to strength ever since and remains a powerful presence in Indian politics today.

## Self-expressionism in the mainstream

The politics of self-expression did not remain confined within the intellectually rigorous, but relatively isolated milieu of the self-appointed prophets of radical nationalism. In the period between the early 1930s and the early 1950s, many

elements of anti-societal politics were absorbed into the political mainstream. Muslim ideas of self-expression were taken up by middle-class activists, who became increasingly influential in the mainstream All India Muslim League, as it transformed itself from a 'communalist' lobby group into a 'national' movement from 1937 onwards. Some years older but broadly similar in outlook and function to the early Hindu Mahasabha, the League had started off in 1906 as an ethno-religious lobby group of the land-owning and professional elite within the context of the politics of interest. The main political concerns were the securing of special representation of Muslims within the various institutions of limited self-rule and the defence of Muslim privileges, particularly in UP. In other respects political opinions within the League varied a great deal, and in the case of some individual members, often changed dramatically over time – from 'secular' to 'religious', pro-Khilafat to anti-Khilafat, loyalist to nationalist. During those early years, Muslim Leaguers were often also members of other political organizations such as the All India Congress, the then recognized umbrella organization of Indian nationalism. Ideological inconsistency and conflicting interests, however, led to many splits within the League and by the early 1930s, rendered it largely ineffective.

By that time, Muslim participation in Congress had fallen to an all-time low following several years of religious conflict in many parts of India and a perceived unwillingness of Hindu Congress politicians to take Muslim demands seriously. This left many nationalist Muslims anxious, insecure and in search for a new organizational and ideological home. With the creation of wider electoral politics at the provincial level in the 1935 Government of India Act, effective organization with a mass base had become imperative for political survival. Muhammad Ali Jinnah, freshly returned from several years of self-imposed exile in Britain, responded to this crisis by radically revamping the League into a Muslim nationalist – and increasingly separatist – mass organization. His problem was that this had to be done largely from scratch. The League had no experience of mass mobilization, hardly any power base at the grass-roots level and not even a semblance of ideological unity. Jinnah had no choice but to cut corners. He forged alliances with anybody that could deliver votes and support. The Muslim segment of the Urdu middle-class milieu was of particular significance for the political renewal of the League, as this stratum supplied most of the dedicated party activists that were needed to stage demonstrations and representations of the League's claim to speak for all Muslims of India. Middle-class activists – very often young people and students – were also responsible for saturating League ideology with the political ideals and organizational forms of collective self-expression. The anti-societalism that flowed naturally from this persuasion was politically useful for the League. By re-orientating the aims and substance of politics towards celestial goals against and above society, self-expressionist nationalism could help to avoid hard and potentially divisive questions about the League's relation to concrete political interest.

Muhammad Ali Jinnah's official pronouncements are a good indication for a widespread slide into anti-societal militarism. By virtue of his old-style liberal background he has to be regarded as something like a moderate. But ever willing to welcome any prospective group of followers into the League, the *Qa'id-e Aczam* spoke with several voices: when addressing peasant meetings in Bengal he promised the removal of socio-economic grievances;[146] when conducting his protracted negotiations with the British and the Congress he acted as a liberal lobbyist with a creative and acute awareness of legal compromise.[147] When addressing members of the Urdu middle-class milieu on the university campuses of Lahore and Aligarh, however, Jinnah espoused a martial sense of politics and harped on the tragedy of Islamic decline.[148]

In his famous address to the Lucknow session of the League in October 1937, commonly regarded as the transition point from communalism to nationalism he exhorted the Muslims of India:

> Organise yourself, establish your solidarity and complete unity. Equip yourself as trained and disciplined soldiers. Create the feeling of an esprit de corps and of comradeship amongst yourselves. (…) [As a result]…a nation will emerge worth of its past glory and history and will live to make the future history greater and more glorious not only in Indian but in the annals of the world.[149]

The motif of the 'political soldier' recurred throughout the *Qa'id-e Aczam*'s speeches from then on.[150] The fact that most observers would find this passage a common-place expression of nationalism indicates just how widespread military metaphors and the appeal to the 'world' as ultimate audience and reference point had become at the time. Others of Jinnah's pronouncements were direct paraphrases from Mashriqi; for instance, when he proclaimed on All India Radio that 'This discipline of Ramazan [the holy month of fasting] was designed by our prophet to give us the necessary strength for action' since Islam 'as you all know, really means action'.[151] Past military glory such as the Muslim conquest of Spain and India were frequently mentioned to boost middle-class morale in the North Western regions.[152]

At the same time, Jinnah often quoted anti-Muslim statements by Hindu nationalists in order to conjure up a military threat that implicitly required, if not a military then at least a paramilitary response from the Muslim side; for instance Savarkar's invitation to the Sikhs to 'develop into a great military force in Punjab' in order to keep Muslims down;[153] or the assertion that the Hindu Mahasabha's aim was to 'militarize and industrialize the Hindus' as to drive the Muslims out of India;[154] These (not at all groundless) references fed into his more general invocations of a dangerous world and of Muslim helplessness that constituted the staple of Jinnah's rhetorical repertoire. Explicit Social Darwinism which is so noticeable in both Savarkar and Mashriqi is largely absent from this, but the main function of the central emphasis on war remains the same as in their prophetic

ruminations; it prompted people to suspend social reality as they saw it around them, and encouraged them to fall back to loyalties generated by the *ausnahmezustand*. Most famous in this context was, of course, Jinnah's dictum that the unbridgeable difference between Muslims and Hindus stemmed not from specific beliefs and practices, but from the fact that one's hero was the other's villain and vice versa.[155] This was a textbook rendition of Carl Schmitt's friend and foe distinction and assumes a state of perpetual warfare as definitive experience of identity formation.

The conceptualization of politics as warfare was translated into the most common organizational form of the politics of self-expression – the paramilitary formation. In this case it was called Muslim League National Guards.[156] The initial idea was floated by the Raja of Mahmudabad during the 1937 Muslim League annual session in Lucknow with the immediate aim of getting unemployed youth off the street.[157] In line with the overall lack of grass-roots organization in the League, however, the Guards never managed to develop into the tightly structured and independent paramilitary force they were envisioned to be. They remained a largely amateurish body with more symbolic than actual significance[158] that did not enjoy any corporate or institutional identity distinct from their parent organization. UP stalwart Liaqat Ali Khan patronizingly suggested the use of 'cheap medals' to motivate gullible members[159]; and according to Siddique Ali Khan the Salar-e-Ala (Commander-in-Chief) of the Guards, 'the responsible Muslim League office-bearers devoted little attention to the Muslim League National Guards organization and (…) the Muslim National Guards and their officers were not nicely treated'.[160] Moreover, within the ideological orbit of the League, the Guards did not enjoy a monopoly of military organization. Even much smaller bodies without any countrywide significance such as the Punjab Muslim Student Federation drew up blueprints for military organization and training of their own during the early 1940s.[161] The Guards' fortunes changed somewhat as the fight for separate nationhood began to lead into actual or anticipated religious violence. From only 530 members in summer 1945, the organization managed to enrol 15,000 men by December of the same year, and remained within figures of ten thousands throughout 1946–7.[162] When in 1946 Khurshid Anwar – who was a better organizer than his predecessors – took over as head of the organization,[163] many members of the declining Khaksars, joined the Guards as did a large number of demobilized soldiers after the end of the War.[164]

Militarism had become a prominent feature of Muslim League ideology. Several activists were prepared to push social-Darwinist and fascistic thinking much further than the relatively mild and usually reactive pronouncements of the *Qaid-e-Azam*. The ideological fashions of the Khaksars and the RSS exercised a powerful sway even over those who were officially hostile to them. In the late 1930s, three key members of the Punjab Muslim Student Federation (an organization allied to the All India Muslim League) produced an Urdu pamphlet entitled *Khilafat-e-Pakistan Iskim* (henceforth *Scheme*).[165] The authors, Ibrahim Ali Chishti, Abdus Sattar Khan Niazi and Mian Muhammad Shafi, intended to make

a deliberately provocative contribution to the debate about the future constitution of India, which was going on in the Muslim League in the years before the landmark Lahore session of 1940. Although this is not the centre of interest here, the pamphlet was amongst the first to argue for a territorial solution to the problem of Muslim nationhood. The *Scheme* received a mixed response at the time,[166] but was later used as a propaganda pamphlet in support of Pakistan. Niazi and Chishti were both religious scholars from a small town provincial background (after 1942 Niazi taught *Islamiyyat* at Islamia College, Lahore) and made political careers, periodically falling in and out of favour with the far-right fringes of the post-Partition Pakistan Muslim League.[167] Mian Muhammad Shafi became a well-known journalist under his pen name 'Meem Sheen' who joined the left-leaning *Pakistan Times* group of newspapers after Partition.

The central concern of the *Scheme* was to provide both a constitutional blueprint and a strategy for action to re-establish the world domination of Islam,[168] beginning with a *reconquista* of Hindustan. In order to achieve this aim, the pamphlet argues, the Muslim community had to stop their reliance on constitutional politics, which implied an undue dependence on outsiders.[169] Instead, they had to begin a quest for internal unity and discipline that would, in due course, produce a 'God Man' or 'übermensch' (*Khuda mard*), who would lead a renewed military struggle for world domination.[170] Napoleon and Hitler are depicted as saviours, whom the Muslims of India and elsewhere should emulate.[171] Victory in world history was interpreted not as the outcome of superior administrative, technological or economic power, but as the result of superior will power (*imani taqat*)[172] alone. In order to attain this will power, both spirit and body had to be cleansed from any weakness and impurity, which could only be achieved through military and religious training.[173] Initially this training would be imparted by a vanguard party (*jama$^{c}$at*), made up of pure individuals, and later, when a Muslim state was established in a section of India, by the proposed Caliphate of Pakistan itself.[174] Throughout the pamphlet the purifying role of radicalism, violence and armed struggle[175] was emphasized and juxtaposed to both Congress non-violence and the 'accursed system of Western democracy'.[176]

This pattern of argumentation incorporates all the hallmarks of the politics of self-expression: the politics of negotiation and bargaining with others is sharply criticized; instead the purpose of politics is reduced to seeking salvation through the expression of a purified inner self; the destruction of society is advocated in the guise of preparing for the *ausnahmezustand* – the total mobilization and military organization of the nation for never-ending battle. The *Scheme* operates within a global universe, in which might is right, and dominance per se is the goal of all combatant nations. The value of military might is taken as self-explanatory, whereas the value of civilization or economic prosperity are downplayed or ignored. As a result leadership and foreign policy, rather than the balancing of internal differences of interest receive the most attention in the actual constitutional blueprint of the *Scheme*.[177] The actual 'constitution' (*dastur*) of the prospective Caliphate of Pakistan is dealt with on one page, which includes little

more than a vague reference to an advisory council of notables, who were to represent all the interests of society in subcommittees.[178] This is a corporatist vision typical of the time period. Since interests were seen as non-political givens and were believed to be resolvable by administrative action alone, no thought is spared on what procedures should be adopted to resolve political conflict between the envisioned representatives of interest. Symbolic matters were seen as much more important than institutional mechanisms. It is highly revealing for the overall orientation of the pamphlet that a description of the proposed flag of the new state is given nearly the same space as its 'constitution'. Flags are an important instrument of self-expression that can be effortlessly incorporated into a militaristic sense of politics. Flags can be used to signal possession or control over specific areas while at the same time making a visible statement about the historical identity of their owners. For the student authors of the *Scheme*, the prospective flag was a visual representation of what it meant to be a Muslim; with the delight of schoolboys preparing for a full-costume re-enactment of an ancient battle, they devised an intricate multi-coloured design, which appropriated the flags of earlier (Arab) Muslim empires such as the Abbasids and Umayyads. The national symbol of the Caliphate of Pakistan was to be the date palm, because it stood for the Muslims' ultimate origin, the deserts of the Arabian Peninsula. All symbols with sectarian connotation were either to be avoided, or to be used simultaneously in order to express national unity.

The *Scheme* is important because it indicates a fundamental *formal* difference between the politics of self-expression and earlier forms of politics based on processes of communication and negotiation. This was not about *arguing* the case of a new politics in order to convince a sceptical audience – a stylistic orientation and rhetorical perspective that is still visible in Savarkar's mystico-biological reasoning about Hinduism, and leaves a distinct didactic aftertaste in Mashriqi's oeuvre. Niazi, Chishti and Shafi did not want to change opinions, they merely wanted to express how they themselves *felt* as Muslim activists and hoped that similar feelings would be induced or evoked in their readers. The *Scheme* was designed to stimulate an affective emotional state of empowerment in the reader while simultaneously humiliating an imaginary opponent. The acts of reading and writing themselves produced the kind of *ausnahmezustand* in which the difference between friend and foe had come into sharp relief. As people sat down to study the pamphlet, or assembled in small groups to hear it being read out aloud, they were transported into a different sphere of existence where they could contemplate images and emotions that everyday life did not normally permit. Within their fleeting worlds, the political dreamers possessed the ability to rip the fabric of society to shreds.

Many passages in the *Scheme* were deliberate inducements to engage in power fantasies of this kind. In a particularly bone-chilling section the authors asserted that the difference between Hindus and Muslims was the same as the difference between humans and animals. The obvious technical and political achievements of non-Muslims, it is argued, do not alter this basic fact, since many animals can

perform tasks which are superior to human capabilities, but nevertheless remain animals.[179] As a result, even the lowliest and meanest of Muslims is by definition superior to the best non-Muslim.[180] Although non-Muslims can expect to be treated with the same care with which a considerate person would treat a domestic animal, the *Scheme* argues, their lives and possessions can be sacrificed if Muslim interests demanded that, just like a chicken would be slaughtered in the case of hunger.[181] In a remarkable pseudo-biologist formulation, the authors argue that a Hindu killed in a communal riot undergoes an ontological improvement in the same way as a goat 'molecule' improves when it is turned into a human 'molecule' through the process of digestion. Until Muslim supremacy is again established in all of India, non-Muslims should be identified as targets of hatred and violence, not so much because of a fault of their own, but because such an identification would unite the Muslim community in the same way as anti-Semitism and the attack on its neighbours had united Hitler's Germany.[182]

Much of this was said in order to provoke potential Hindu readers into a test of strength that could easily degenerate into a real *ausnahmezustand* on the streets of North Indian cities. In August 1946 a Hindu magazine demanded the proscription of the *Scheme* on the grounds that it was inciting communal hatred.[183] The colonial authorities were now faced with the choice of giving extra recognition to the authors by banning the publication, or of ignoring the proscription request which in Hindu eyes would make them look like Muslim stooges. In either case, political movements in the ground had an opportunity to mobilize their supporters for or against a ban. Since this was a typical zero-sum issue – there cannot really be any compromise between banning and not banning a pamphlet containing deliberate insults – a battle that could be pursued indefinitely, leading to ever-growing hostility between friend and foe and to an ever increasing destruction of society as it existed.

## Conclusion

The politics of self-expression launched a savage attack against the very heart of the colonial politics of interest: if self-expressionism could be pared down to a single ideological concern, it was the desire to fortify the self-expression of innermost identities against any attempts to demean such identities through manoeuvres of rationalization. The politics of interest was based on the assumption that most people could be bought, and that anything that could not be bought in politics was either irrelevant or a smokescreen for cynical manipulation. Self-expressionists understood only too well that such 'rationalization' was a tool of the powers that be, designed to extinguish any yearning for an alternative system right at the moment of its conception. The prophets of self-expression held up their own sense of emotional authenticity against such manoeuvres of control; but the ubiquitous celebrations of war and violence also indicate that the politics of interest had in a sense already won the argument. The politics of self-expression was an unhappy consciousness born out of defeat. It expressed a will to power, a

will to have something better, but did not go much further than forever cherishing and re-living the moment when this will was broken on the wheel of established facts. As we shall see in Chapter 2, there was something masochistic about it all.

The politicians of self-expression could not answer the reductionism of the politics of interest with a radical re-politicization of the societal; they could only challenge the politics of interest by outflanking it; by locating the political in conceptual spaces and experiences that the politics of interest could not reach. Only the emotional and moral starkness of the *ausnahmezustand* of war, or the 'freedom' of the newly born baby were regarded as capable of sustaining an alternative sense of what politics was. Many standard assumptions of colonial political science were incorporated unchallenged into the new politics. Most important was the idea that the building blocks of the political are individualistic monads that exist in a state of never-ending competition. This was an image that stood at the very heart of the colonial enterprise. The perpetual warfare between communities and castes was exactly what justified the colonial presence and explained the pre-political nature of India's 'mosaic' society. Other assumptions of the politics of interest went similarly unchallenged. Self-expressionists hated the logic of patronage networks, wished to hell the realities of interest group politics and were bored to death by the calculations of the great communal numbers game; but they continued to think with the divisions that the politics of interest had institutionalized. Subhas Chandra Bose was untypical in his insistence that self-expressionism could overcome the confines of communal antagonism; Savarkar and the neo-fascists in the Muslim League hit the prevailing mood of the time much more accurately, when they identified the essential enemy as the communal enemy.

Despite all continuities, the politics of self-expression was in a very important sense *not* an extension of the politics of interest, however. The very basis of the political remained radically different. The politics of interest was based on the assumption that state power was a given reality and all other considerations flowed from this. The politics of self-expression in contrast was based on a *will to power*, but one that had already half-realized its own impossibility. For the self-expressionist, legitimate power was never a reality, only something to be invoked for the future. This distinction is important because it imposes limitations on any direct reading of self-expressionist utterances as a steppingstone to nationalist liberation. Pamphlets like the *Khilafat-e-Pakistan Scheme* may have talked about the establishment of an Islamic polity in the future, but it would be missing the point to see them as a straightforward advocacy of a Muslim state. The state that mattered was not the state so inadequately described in the text, but the state of power that the individual consumer of such a pamphlet could experience as a consequence of reading. It would be analytically false to reverse the self-expressionist move of outflanking the politics of interest, by dragging its utterances back into the conventional grammar of politics that it sought to overcome.

# 2

# STATES OF POWER

The anti-societal orientation of the politics of self-expression went deeper than the overt condemnations of the politics of interest that peppered the ideological discourse of its prophets. The self-expressionist worldview itself, and the way in which it was translated into political action, were already designed to conceal societal questions. Of crucial importance was an outflanking manoeuvre based on the equivocation of individuals on one side and large collective communities on the other. Both individuals and collectives were made alike by the assumption that they had single and unchanging 'selves', which needed to be expressed in an arena of existential struggle. What was hidden from view was the vast epistemic space between these polar ends of the political imagination: the interrelation of individuals in social structures that formed larger networks and communities. The main arena of practical politics was thus no longer the space where people interacted with each other – the debating chamber, the public sphere, society in general – but people's individual bodies and souls. Primary attention and significance was given to how political activists related to their innermost feelings, and how these feelings could be brought into accordance with larger projects of empowerment and salvation.

This strange loss of the central field of political vision – as normally conceived – had implications for how self-expressionists understood commonplace concepts such as 'state' and 'nation', and what they regarded as political action. The last chapter has already indicated the general direction of this reformulation of the political. A pamphlet like the *Khilafat-e-Pakistan Scheme* was only in the second instance a constitutional blueprint that its authors wished to contribute to the wider debate over a Muslim future in South Asia. In the first instance, the pamphlet was a statement of how young people felt about their presence in society and how they wished to feel in times to come. Writing and reading the pamphlet were major political actions in themselves, because they engendered at least a premonition of the same affective states that dominated the desires of self-expressionist agitators. It was not *what* a political demand was that mattered, but *how* it was formulated and how it was pursued in collective action. In order to decode the political culture of self-expressionism we have to move from content to form.

This chapter continues the discussion where it was left off at the end of the last: with an analysis of the formal language of political discourse. The subject in question is political poetry, and the point to be demonstrated is that self-expressionist propaganda was no longer a vehicle for argument but an object of aesthetic contemplation. The emphasis on witnessing and experiencing beauty leads us further into a logic of politics dominated by desires for empowerment and intoxication. States of being 'out of one's mind' were made central to the politics of self-expression because they conjured away the social realities of the politics of interest that forever overshadowed the political consciousness of a marginalized middle class. The central section of this chapter then discusses ideas of statehood within the appropriate formal context of self-expressionist liberation, and demonstrates how self-expressionism could grow out of the politics of interest as it underwent successive stages of radicalization. After passing a detour through the connection between nationalism and individual action, the final section of this chapter focuses on another area of political action that has no place in liberal politics but dominated the practice of self-expressionism to a remarkable extent: body politics. As we shall see, the politicians of self-expression used the deliberate infliction of hardship and pain on their bodies as acts of purification from the societal embedded-ness that was forever seen as the chief obstacle to a more authentic and liberated way of life.

## The aestheticization of politics

Self-expressionist texts were not to be read in the same way as the election manifesto of a liberal party. The point was not to persuade anybody, not even to argue anything at all, but to produce an emotional state of mind that annihilated the difference between the collective self of the national community and the individual self of its members. This new form of political writing and reading – or speaking and listening – invaded many political positions during the time period under review, even those that usually had a much clearer and more cerebral vision of the political. A striking example for such a shift can be observed in the propaganda activities of the Muslim League leftwing. Cardholding Communist Party of India (CPI) activists were told by the Comintern to 'infiltrate' nationalist movements, which in the context of mid-1940s India included the League. Jinnah eagerly welcomed such 'infiltrators' because they possessed excellent skills in grass-root organization and mass propaganda. A number of 'fellow travellers' and other freelance sympathizers of socialism also joined the League at that time. All leftwingers were naturally opposed to the fascistic RSS, Khaksar and *Scheme* versions of the politics of self-expression. But the adoption of self-expressionist forms of politics often made differences in content meaningless, or in the worst cases even opened backdoors to social-Darwinist modes of thinking. A comparison of two pieces of political poetry – the first war time and communist 'proper', the second leftwing, but after integration into Muslim

League nationalism – is indicative of the creeping power of self-expressionist styles and discursive motifs.

In 1941 the song-writer and cultural activist Sheila Bhatia wrote the following Punjabi verses to 'organize' labouring women in the Old City of Lahore:[1]

> Rise, O young dames
> Your country calls you
> No sugar, no flower, no matches
> No oil, no wood are to be seen
> Your children are dying of hunger
> Get up, don't fret and let your bones crack [get moving]
> Only you will wipe out your hunger
> Only you will obliterate your nakedness
> Only you can save your own honour
> Your leaders have developed deaf ears.

This is a classic expression of communist tactics. Ordinary people are first to be reminded of their everyday problems – no provisions, chaos at Government ration shops – then to be weaned away from traditional authorities and finally transformed into communist-led revolutionary agents. The point is that the final aim of this process, a better form of social existence, remains illuminated by the concrete context of ordinary life. This is politics that wants to change society not outflank it or oppose it.

When the trade unionist Fatima Kaniz composed political poetry for the Muslim League in 1946, supposedly 'left' political discourse had become indistinguishable from the more extreme forms of the politics of self-expression. She wrote

> Rise and rejuvenate hope in the flowerbed of life;
> Go and familiarize the nightingales with the garden.
>
> How long would the singing voices of the garden remain silent?
> It is the compulsion of nature that they start singing again.
>
> We have been in deep slumber for long; now it is time that
> We put intellect and wisdom in the lead.
>
> We have to give proof to civilization of the present that we are alive:
> And that our efforts could yet raise the earth to the sky.
>
> If we want to exist in this world, we have to so prevail
> that every action represents our quest for life.
>
> Get out of the darkness of ignorance with the light of activism
> Make the dark alleys the envy of the light of the Milky Way
>
> There is no higher privilege than the opportunity to serve the nation
> If we go asunder we should do so in glory to earn the right of rebirth.[2]

All connection to concrete circumstances of life is lost here, and replaced with metaphors drawn from a high-cultural Indo-Persian literary repertoire. The poem is set in the imaginary space of the wishful dream, the garden as metaphor of paradise. By implication, the object of longing is located beyond and in contradiction to the world of the everyday. Unlike in the communist poem quoted before, the focus is not on a better social world, but on a world that transcends the societal. Some unchanging cultural essence, the 'we' of the poem is invited to awaken and to come into its own after a long slumber. The process of self-awakening takes place before a cosmic observer ('civilization') who deals out 'rights of rebirth' and is closely associated with a stellar imagination (raising 'the earth to the sky'; 'the envy of the light of the Milky Way'). The following passage is Social Darwinism pure and simple: 'if we want to exist in this world ("the flowerbed of life"), we have to prevail in this world that every action represents our quest for life'. All this could have come directly from the pen of Mashriqi or from the authors of the *Scheme*.

To a large extent, the shift from the socially aware poetry of the proper communist to the anti-societal stance of the socialist in Muslim League garb was due to a change in form and rhetorical position. Bhatia wrote in Punjabi and in a self-consciously simple idiom. Her objective was a mixture of the didactic and the discursive (in the conventional sense of the term); she wanted to teach people of lower social status what was good for them, but she also felt that in order to do so she had to rely on her target audience's ability to consider the relative power of arguments. The main punch lines of the poem make it very clear that it was the working poor themselves who had to take political action. Fatima Kaniz, in contrast, wrote in Urdu and in a self-consciously high-brow idiom. Although she, too, retained a didactic position in the sense that she exhorted common people to awaken and to 'put intellect and wisdom in the lead', she did not want to explain, but to dazzle. As with the power fantasies in the *Scheme*, her poem was expected to work by making something deep inside the psyche of the recipients resonate with the kind of identity expressed by the author.

It should be noted at this point, that poetry was not an incidental form of political articulation in North India at the time, but absolutely central to it. In the first instance, this was a result of the fundamental fact that literacy was still the preserve of a minority, albeit a slowly expanding one. Political poetry connected well with oral literary culture, both high and low brow. Political poems were routinely recited in mass gatherings, turning political meetings into artistic competitions. When political activists of all ideological backgrounds (save perhaps upper-class conservative loyalists) went out to win support for their causes amongst the working poor – both in cities and the countryside; they recited (Muslims) or sang (Hindus) poems while walking through neighbourhoods, and also brandished them on placards and handed them out on leaflets to passers-by.[3] Rhyming and rhythmic language had clear mnemonic advantages over prose, being able to transmit political messages reliably to large numbers of people. The use value of political poetry for preaching to the lower orders of society was not its only merit,

however. Literate and middle-class circles were themselves entirely enthralled by the power of the poetic form. Both 'Hindu' and 'Muslim' newspapers regularly published political commentary in verse, quite often in very prominent places such as the front page. Much the same goes for political pamphlets; the *Scheme*, for instance, is awash with poetic quotations from various authors, most prominently from Muhammad Iqbal, poet–philosopher par excellence and icon of North Indian Muslim high culture at the time.[4]

The often self-indulgent slide into poetic hyperbole was rooted in a political culture dating back to the days of the Khilafat movement.[5] The dominant men in the movement had not been school masterly and pedantic prophets of doom like Savarkar and Mashriqi, but flamboyant journalists who sought to market religious passion as a political and commercial commodity. Being able to write poetry or prose that sent shivers down the spines of the readership by virtue of an artful combination of aesthetic titillation, self-pitied indignation and outbursts of fanatical determination, was guaranteed to sell copy in the constricted market of vernacular publishing. One of the most successful exponents of this type of writing was Maulana Zafar Ali Khan (1873–1956). Born in a village near Sialkot he was one of the leading figures of early twentieth-century Urdu newspaper publishing. After stints in Hyderabad, Bombay and other parts of India he came to edit the extremely influential Lahore daily *Zamindar* through much of the time period under review.[6] Politically, the *maulana* was generally committed to Islamic resurgence, albeit often more cultural and political than strictly religious. After participating in the Non-Cooperation/Khilafat movement he maintained a fairly prominent position within Congress but later drifted away from it. Following some years with his own political organization – the Ittihad-e-Millat ('National Unity') movement – Zafar Ali Khan ended up in Jinnah's rejuvenated Muslim League. There he made himself useful by translating Jinnah's speeches into Urdu, self-obligingly adding the odd radical rhetorical flourish or religious incantation to the more restrained original messages of the *Qa'id-e Aᶜzam*.[7]

The close connection between aesthetics and the politics of self-expression is exemplified in the following poem, written by Maulana Zafar Ali Khan in 1936, and entitled *Nizam-e Islam*:

> The stars of the East and West shine brilliantly in their constellation ['*Nizam*']
> Here like the shining moon; there like the full moon.
>
> From the vinery of Makkah we have built taverns everywhere
> Relish the drink, for our bottle is in rotation.
>
> We are ready to die for the honour of the Prophet of Allah
> Our name is to ascend from the earth to the seventh heaven
>
> We do not bow our head to any one except Allah
> Our work is to make Caesar and Khusrau bend to His will

Tie the waistband as a slave of the Prophet
So some day the English will be our slaves.

Who is great and who is small, the Hindu shall soon see.
We would bring forth our Allah; they can bring forth their Ram

Our language is Urdu that is the language of all India
It is in this language that we give our message to Gandhi[8]

This is a combination of cultural titillation with an invocation of a state of existential hostility between Muslims and Hindus. Zafar Ali Khan was renowned for his extensive Urdu vocabulary which included archaisms drawn from Arabic and Persian as well as neologism of his own creation – all words that were not necessarily familiar to the readers or listeners and created the impression of great cultural sophistication. The main examples here are names for stellar constellations and 'khumestan' – 'vinery', normally a relatively obscure word that had become one of the maulana's most favoured phrases.[9] The title of the poem – 'Nizam-e Islam' – is simultaneously ambiguous and highly sophisticated by the lexicographic standards of the time; it could mean 'Islamic System' (a premonition of later twentieth-century usage) or 'Islamic way of life'. Further flavours are added by the fact that 'nizam' is a derivative of 'nazm' – 'discipline' or, indeed, 'poetic construction'.

Being and poetry were intrinsically intertwined. Creative engagement with the Urdu language was seen as an essential component of Muslim self-expression in both the cultural and the political sphere; hence the somewhat out-of-context exclamation at the end of Zafar Ali's poem about throwing up a challenge to Gandhi through and by using Urdu. At the same time, contestation of power was made a mainstay of Muslim identity. The most accessible verses promised that Muslims will make the colonial overlords 'their slaves' and prove to the Hindus that 'our' Allah is more powerful than 'their' Ram. The source of this newly found power is twofold: it consists in the first instance in the power of the beauty of the Urdu language itself – this is the whole point of the poem – but also in an ethics of emotional commitment. By being fanatical followers of the prophet – the metaphor of wine for this is commonplace in Indo-Persian high culture – Muslims can expect to have a place in heaven as well as a glorious national history. What the *maulana* and his contemporaries tried to describe with the help of conventional metaphors of wine and drunkenness was the merger of three emotional states into an integrated feeling of Muslim identity: first, there is intoxication with aesthetic beauty, particularly of poetry; (this has been explicitly described by one of Zafar Ali's friends as 'Shara-e Husn-e Urdu' – 'the intoxicating essence of the beauty of Urdu'[10]). Then there is the intoxication by power, the feeling one will get the moment one is able to 'bend' others 'to our will'; and finally the intoxicated commitment – without doubt or reservation – to the Prophet and his community. The three are entirely indivisible within the political culture that gave birth to the Muslim politics of self-expression.

Poetic beauty was not a rhetorical embellishment meant to make political arguments more appealing to their target audiences; beauty, and more generally the act of contemplation, were political goals in themselves. Their importance was not only in evidence in political poetry or in the verbosity and hyperbole of political pamphlets; it was also the main point about militarism to which the political culture of self-expression attached much value. Volunteer organizations were cherished because they imposed an aesthetic makeover to the appearance of their members. As Bose aptly described it, Indians were transformed from an irregular crowd to a marching column in uniform. Their political message and their aesthetic appeal were one and the same. It is testimony to the prevailing power of the culture of self-expression that even traditional religious and loyalist political organizations felt compelled at some point to at least consider the formation of such volunteer corps.[11] Moreover, aesthetics had taken over the inner workings of political discourse. When looking for solutions to constitutional problems, the authors of the *Scheme* spent most of their time contemplating maps and flags; politics centred on things to look at, not on arguments to think about.

All this was logically connected to the aim of self-expression. The coming into its own of a national (or individual) soul had to be contemplated or witnessed by somebody to attain meaning and reality. Coming into its own was an aesthetic problem not a political one, at least not in the conventional sense. Not without reason did a famous nationalist song – distributed on gramophone records to middle-class households all over India, later proscribed – centre on the following words:

> Our India still commands the same respect in the *eyes* [of the world].
> It is a wonderful *picture*, this *picture* of India.
> *Behold* those lions of the Punjab – the heroes of the battlefield – the glorious power. (…)
> *Behold*, *behold* those friends of mine[12]

Political salvation was a matter of 'beholding' and of being emotionally moved by 'the picture' of India. Ostensibly, the position of the speaker in the poem is that of a demonstrator or guide, located somewhere between India and 'the world'. The singer is exhorting the latter to validate the former by bearing witness. But the poem is, of course, primarily addressed to Indians. It is really them who are asked to alternate their gaze between their nation – in other words, the representation of their selves – and a world that is basically observing the fact that they are observing themselves.

This intricate combination of multiple instances of navel gazing is precisely what Walter Benjamin called an 'aestheticization of politics' which he saw as the defining characteristic of European fascism. He did not mean that any connection between politics and art was negative; a 'politicization of art' is after all what he called for to counter the dangers of fascism.[13] What was dangerous in his eyes was the suggestion that the expression and aesthetic contemplation of political

identity was in itself all there was to politics. This distracted attention away from the realm of the societal, where *real* politics – in Benjamin's eyes the question of ownership of means of production – was taking place. The anti-societalism of the politics of self-expression was as much rooted in its form and stylistic vocabulary as in its ideological pronouncements.

## The politics of intoxication

The importance of the metaphor 'wine' in the imagination of self-expression relates back to the same anti-societal orientation. If it was only in the *khumestan* that an authentic identity could be fully experienced, then being itself required the super-cession or destruction of the world of the everyday and of the realities, restrictions and obligations it imposed. The politics of intoxication was by no means confined to Muslims. Subhas Chandra Bose had a clear recognition of the cultural norms of his audience when he told a mixed, but predominantly Hindu student crowd in Lahore,

> The only method of achieving freedom is for us to think and feel as free men. Let there be a complete revolution within and *let us be thoroughly intoxicated with the wine of freedom*. It is only *freedom-intoxicated* men and women who will be able to free humanity. When the 'will to be free' is roused within us we shall then proceed *to plunge headlong into an ocean of activity*. The voice of caution will no longer deter us and the lure of truth and glory will lead us on to our cherished goal.[14]

As noted earlier, freedom meant much more for Bose than simple political liberation; it denoted an alternative state of being in which total salvation from society had been achieved. This is essentially the same as what Maulana Zafar Ali Khan and Fatima Kaniz had in mind. Their politics was driven by the desire to escape from the confines of everyday existence. But the desire to escape was in itself impossible without a tacit affirmation of what it sought to escape from. This paradox is useful to understand a whole range of issues connected with the political culture of self-expression.

Following Nietzsche's ruminations about the 'apollonic' and the 'dionysiac', German cultural analysis has defined the state of *rausch* as 'begrenzte Entgrenzung' – 'delimited de-limitation'.[15] *Rausch* is an untranslatable word offering a more comprehensive package of meaning than 'intoxication'; including nuances such as physical and mental ecstasies, loss of control, flight of fancy, but also poisoning and danger. 'Delimited de-limitation' means that *rausch* defines and creates a time–space which is clearly distinct from (and thus delimited by) what is 'ordinary', and yet within this *rausch* space no limits apply. Put slightly differently, there can be no freedom of *rausch* without the constraints of sobriety. Permanent drunkenness is either meaningless or amounts to death. The dialectical relationship between restraint and intoxication can help us understand

how the politics of self-expression operated in practical terms and – in due course – how it dealt with the State as a political concept.

A state of ecstasy, beauty and empowerment was a problematic political goal because of its inescapable entanglement with the constraints of temporality. Total liberation as a practical experience could never last very long. As said already, one cannot be drunk forever. All that the politics of self-expression could offer for the present were collective forays into various states of *temporary* intoxication. In practical terms these ranged from ecstatic demonstrations and mass meetings to acts of violence. Politics became a frantic pursuit of such episodic experiences. The 1930s and 1940s witnessed the proliferation of disputes over matters that would normally have been considered of little consequence; all that mattered was to find some pretext for staging political action that gave the participants a feeling of collective *rausch*, the transportation into a temporary state of being that was simultaneously authentic, de-societalized, aesthetic, and powerful.

Periodic collective confrontations involving mass demonstrations and violence, were, of course, nothing new in the political culture of colonial India. As Sandria Freitag and Paul Brass have pointed out, power struggles between local elites were often pursued in public arenas, commonly involving religious symbolism.[16] This was the core of what the British colonial authorities came to label as 'communal riots'. But despite the fact that the issues at stake often had no discernible 'rational' validity, 'communalism' was hardly ever the descent into irrational religious fanaticism that the British (for their own self-interest) portrayed it as. The alleged causes of confrontation were in most cases relatively unimportant in their own right. Music in front of a mosque, the slaughter of cows, or the extension of a municipal street onto a mosque precinct were all issues that Indians were perfectly capable of resolving peacefully through negotiated compromise. That is, unless they *chose* to turn them into symbolic focal points of public confrontations that were really about other underlying contests over power and prestige. Like the 'bread riots' in early modern Britain analysed by John Bohstedt, communal riots followed a certain 'protocol'.[17] Although they could be exceptionally violent, this violence was usually aimed at standard symbolic targets; more importantly, violence was expected to cease once a new equilibrium of power had been established in a locality. As W.C. Smith has noted about this game of traditional and 'lower class' communalism, periods of violence were succeeded by periods of relative amicability.[18] 'Communal rioting' in this sense was the mass political corollary of the 'communal' politics of interest described before; a politics with relatively clear and measurable aims played out according to certain rules within a local arena and with reference to a concrete regime of recognition and allocation.

The confrontations staged by the politicians of self-expression grew out of this tradition of communal confrontation, but altered its character through a process of amplification and abstraction. Since the prophets of self-expression and their camp followers were often isolated individuals without an important place in local power networks, they pursued the game of symbolic confrontation not for immediate political aims that, once met, would make confrontation unnecessary; rather

these politicians utilized them as *rausch*-inducing preliminaries of the ultimate apocalyptic struggle in which a new and better state of being would emerge on the ruins of society. Their methodology has been most aptly described by the anarcho-syndicalist and proto-fascist George Sorel. For him the politics of liberation should never formulate any negotiable aims, but seek to create as many occasions as possible in which political activists can participate in experiences of violence. This experience itself would foster a will to power (or will to freedom) that was no longer bound up with anything concrete and as a result could no longer be controlled by compromise solutions; workers who strike for higher wages can be pacified by granting them higher wages; workers who strike solely for the sake of the experience of defiance cannot be pacified by anything, Sorel reasoned. Under these circumstances, episodes of conflict would eventually grow into a totalized state of conflict from which a better world would be born.[19]

This totalization of conflict involved what Stanley Tambiah has called a process of 'focalization and transvaluation'.[20] A conflict may still start over a concrete issue in a local context, but the involvement of widely shared symbols of identity lifts this conflict out of the local context and draws in an ever-increasing group of people who had nothing to do with the original local cause. A small local quarrel becomes a matter of what the prophets of self-expression have somewhat nebulously described as a nation's 'right to exist' in a universe of perpetual warfare. When this happens, symbols are no longer stand-ins or referents of any particular underlying reality. What is at stake now is not the allocation of resources, nor standing and prestige in society, only abstract power. At this moment, political actors ignore the essential fact that power is not a substance but an attribute. They forget that power does not exist in itself, but emerges only at the moment when somebody can coerce somebody else to do *something* against their will. If this something loses all importance in its own right and becomes nothing more than a stand-in for the abstract ability to coerce itself, then it becomes a power fetish, a magic object in which power appears in a substantiated form independent of its actual performance.

A typical symbol of conflict that had been emptied of any inner meaning while being 'amplified' was the possession of certain buildings or spaces. The most well-known examples from the period under review were the so-called 'Shahidganj Affair' in Lahore in the middle of the 1930s,[21] and the still-ongoing fight over the Babri Masjid/Rama Janmabhumi in Ayodhya from 1949 onwards. In both cases, little-used mosques, their significance for local religious communities long faded, were elevated to test cases of the relative strength of 'the Sikhs' or 'the Hindus' vis-à-vis 'the Muslims' in a regional and national context. Self-expressionist spokesmen for the respective religio-national groups claimed possession of these buildings and constructed them as symbolic representations either of a long history of humiliation and victimization that now needed to be avenged, or of the ability of a particular community to show the respective other who was really 'master'. In the eyes of the RSS and the Hindu Mahasabha, who engineered much of the Ayodhya dispute, *any* important Muslim place of worship

was by definition the forceful appropriation of a Hindu holy site. The visible representation of Muslim achievement or power as such was (and is) interpreted as an existential affront to the Hindu nation. In the case of Shahidganj, Muslim agitators – most prominently Maulana Zafar Ali Khan, grand master of intoxication politics – tried to demonstrate to 'the Sikhs' that Muslims could do whatever they pleased in what had now become 'their' territory. Their counterparts in the Akali Dal meanwhile saw the ability to reclaim the building as a Gurudwara as the first step to demonstrate to Muslims that they were not really masters of Punjab after all. As a senior colonial official noted at the time,

> The discussion between Muslims and Sikhs [over a compromise solution] have come to nothing (…) [A]mong themselves there is no concealment of the fact that they regard this show [the Shahidganj dispute] as a comparatively minor issue, the main issue being Muslim raj [power/rule/domination] in the Punjab.[22]

In both cases – Shahidganj and Babri Masjid – the people living in the locality where the contentious building was actually located, either only played a small part in the agitation or were positively hostile to it. Both Lahore and Ayodhya became focal points for volunteers marching in from elsewhere in India to defend the abstract power of their respective communities. The original call for sending batches of demonstrators to Shahidganj, for instance, was actually issued in Kasur, a neighbouring town of Lahore, and after the agitation had gathered some pace, letters were sent to places further afield such as Multan. Meanwhile reporting in influential papers such as the *Zamindar* prompted more and more Muslim politicians all over the country to jump on the bandwagon.[23]

Another manifestation of the politics of abstract power was the repeated conflict over so-called 'offensive' publications. There were numerous cases for this in the time period under review (and beyond, e.g. the 'Rushdie affair' of 1989)[24]; one example may suffice for illustration. In 1943, Muslim circles decided that the foundational text of the Arya Samaj, Swami Dayananda's *Satyarth Prakash* should be banned by the colonial authorities because of its derogatory chapter about Islam.[25] There were certainly grounds for complaint, but it is revealing that the offending section had already been published in 1884 (and in Urdu translation in 1899).[26] What mattered was that printing an insult against Islam was perceived as an act of Hindu power and of Hindu self-expression, and that was what made it so objectionable for Muslims in the context of the 1940s. What was completely forgotten by all people involved was the fact that Dayananda only spoke for the Arya Samaj – a community that often emphasized its distance from mainstream Hinduism. A Muslim student from Karachi wrote in a letter that was intercepted by the colonial intelligence services as follows:

> Perhaps you do not know what *the Hindus* are doing these days against the Mussalmans. They have prepared a book named Satyarthprakash and

> have written certain passages against our prophet (. . .) As a matter of fact the Hindus wish that the Mussalmans either should go out of India or abandon their religion. Looking at these circumstances it appears that there will be a clash between the two communities.[27]

The campaign for a ban of the book became an act of Muslim self-assertion involving Muslim communities all over India. There were riots in Sind and murders in Punjab.[28] The dispute over an offensive publication such as the *Satyarth Prakash* was such that it did not possess any identifiable links to concrete conflicts over resources. This was a conflict for conflict's sake that could be pursued by anybody anywhere, not just by the inhabitants of the place where the insult was originally formulated. For the Assam Muslim Association, in itself already far removed from the North-Western focus of much of the agitation, the matter pertained to no less than the whole world. At the end of a petition they wrote, 'The existence of such a book in the market is dangerous to public peace, as it wounds the religious susceptibilities of 100 million of Indian Muslims and 600 millions of Muslims around the world.'[29] What mattered was a demonstration of Muslim power that could be measured by numbers; power, moreover, that had no apparent purpose apart from being witnessed and recognized by that imaginary outside witness, 'the world'. It is equally revealing that Hindu newspapers at the time opposed the ban of *Satyarth Prakash* – despite the fact that it contained deeply offensive things about 'orthodox' Hinduism – on the grounds that this would be a 'foretaste of Pakistan'.[30] The latter was understood as nothing else but a state of Muslim overlordship. The right to blaspheme Islam was taken as the sine qua non of Hindu identity, because it denied the collective enemy the enjoyment of their own desired state of collective power.

What most episodic conflicts over symbols of abstract power had in common was that they quickly involved the government of the day, even when they were ostensibly directed at another religious community/nation. In the first instance this was connected to how the colonial regime legitimized itself. It claimed to introduce to India the rule of law and a political government that was even-handed to the different religious, ethnic and caste communities of India. The way the dispute over Shahidganj was fought destroyed the colonial insistence on due process of law because neither side accepted that there was a procedurally fair way of settling the question of who owned the building. It was a zero-sum game, and as such no decision by the courts could ever be seen as legitimate or impartial by both sides. A similar logic applied to the battle over the right to humiliate others in print. Colonial 'even-handedness' required a policy of keeping 'offensive' literature out of circulation in order to prevent conflict. The outcome of this policy was the very opposite, however, since offensive literature could now be used as a means to undermine the colonial regime's self-professed neutrality and impartiality. To ban or not to ban became a question of siding either with one or the other community involved in the conflict.

In practical terms, the public staging of power contests over symbolic issues often took the form of a contest between demonstrators and the government.

These were the very instances where the desired states of collective *rausch*, simultaneous feelings of elation, power, control and aesthetic contemplation could be experienced. The Shahidganj affair, for instance, never led to wholesale street battles between Muslims and Sikhs, but to massive Muslim street demonstrations, followed by *lathi* charges and police firing after the crowds refused to disperse. The stated target of subsequent demonstrations was the 'unjust' governor of Punjab who reputedly felt a 'vengeance' against all Muslims because of the humiliation he had received when Muslim soldiers refused to obey his orders to defend Shahidganj.[31] This line of reasoning points to a transposition of a conflict over 'honour' and abstract power with another religious group to a conflict with the colonial state.

It was in such encounters in the street that the politics of self-expression truly came to life. Its incarnation was the activist experiencing the adrenalin rush of a police line retreating, then looking around him and feeling part of a more or less united crowd of co-religionists drawn from various social backgrounds and different localities. This was an identity based on nothing but the friend and enemy distinction; this moment saw the disappearance of anything societal. The activist could contemplate his/her own power and imagine this to be a 'demonstration' of power to others, the British colonial rulers and other communities. The feeling of power was combined with a feeling of authenticity; in contrast to the more mundane tasks of everyday life, being part of a charging crowd was meaningful and fulfilling.

For much of the time, confrontations with the government were much more important for the politicians of self-expression than confrontations with rival religious communities/nations, although the latter were always needed as the existential enemies that made a politics of perennial warfare meaningful in the first place. The reason for this was that significant states of empowerment could only arise from encounters with significant power; forcing another colonized community to retreat was no great feat, and forcing the colonial police, army or courts to retreat meant that one had in a way become equal to them. This is something that paramilitary organizations such as the Khaksars understood best. Their great emphasis on the connection between power and aesthetic impact was modelled on the aesthetic impact of the colonial state itself. The British thought that marching uniformed soldiers in formation through areas affected by disorder was a good way of impressing Indians with colonial power.[32] No wonder that virtually every movement associated with the politics of self-expression responded in kind. As Sir R. Tottenham of the colonial Home Department observed in 1940,

> the most dangerous feature of the movement is the discipline and organization that drill and training and the wearing of a uniform can impact, combined with the loss of prestige that Government must necessarily suffer by allowing the functions of their police or civic guards to be usurped by non-official agencies.[33]

Attaining statehood was not a matter of a simple substitution of the paramilitary movement for state institutions, however. The politicians of self-expression

always believed that the colonial state was not just a conglomerate of offices and functions, but a living testimony to the fact that brute force was the ultimate source of abstract power. Consequently, it was only through Indians exercising brute force themselves, that state power could be truly possessed. This is why radical nationalists valorized the creation of violent confrontations even when no such confrontations were necessary. The authors of the *Scheme* rejected Western democracy because they could not envision how Indian Muslims could ever find proper political recognition without having to resort to violence.[34] Savarkar made exactly the same point when he stressed that the Hindu nation had to be given a chance to *re-conquer* their hold over India; the Muslims would be bad sports if they simply said sorry for their past deeds and stepped aside.[35] For Mashriqi, finally, the very grandeur of Muslim imperial sovereignty (*badshahat*) lay in the fact that it was acquired by force.[36]

The performance of aesthetically consumable confrontations with the perceived source of political power was a methodology of transfer of power, not in the sense of constitutional arrangements but of actual experiences of power. Such experiences were addictive, but like *rausch* itself they could never last. The politicians of self-expression attempted to stage them again and again to satisfy their political desires. The actual moment of decolonization and Partition in 1947 did not cure this addiction. The politics of self-expression longed for absolute de-societalization, freedom, authenticity, beauty and joy; no mere change in political regimes – no matter how cherished before the event – could ever deliver the goods. So the hunger for contests with the government as supreme source of power continued even after the colonialists had left. The 1949 conflict over the Babri Masjid in Ayodhya was nothing but an attempt to reclaim the newly achieved Indian state as an expression of Hindu power.[37]

In newly founded Pakistan, meanwhile, the old game of self-expressionist religious conflict was continued as a matter of international relations. A good example was the popular reaction to the dispute over the accession of erstwhile Princely States, particularly in the years immediately following Partition. Controversy arose primarily over three such states that were all claimed by Pakistan, but ended up (at least partially) in India: Kashmir, Junagadh and Hyderabad. For many middle-class Muslims in Lahore and Karachi the question of accession was a test case of the relative power of Pakistan – publicly touted as 'the largest Muslim country on Earth'[38] – vis-à-vis 'Hindu' India, not a question of international law or the perceived plight of Muslim populations under Hindu rule. When Hyderabad was forcibly annexed by the Indian army, large crowds gathered in Lahore and asked permission to attack Amritsar with their bare hands if need be in order to avenge this 'insult'.[39] In 1948, somebody in Karachi observed that the tricolour on the Indian embassy flagpole was flying higher than the Pakistani star and crescent on a nearby building; this triggered a serious riot over the government's perceived inability to secure Pakistan's honour.[40] The series of riots that shook Pakistan in 1952 and 1953 had many causes, but their crystallization point was provided by Pakistan's perceived inability to conquer Kashmir

or to defend Middle Eastern Muslims against the Western powers.[41] Once again it was the government of the day that had to face the brunt of an agitation that was overtly aimed at somebody else. As an US embassy official noted at the time,

> psychologically the Central Government [of Pakistan] has stepped into the shoes of the British regime, when it suppresses popular agitation. (…) … political parties including the Muslim League, react just as they did when the British used to suppress agitation for Independence and condemn the action of government.[42]

In March 1953 the main demand of the popular agitation was to purge the Pakistani state apparatuses of members of the heterodox Ahmadiyya sect and to declare them non-Muslims. Once again this was also a matter of blaming one's own government for failing to deliver the goods in an ongoing power contest with the Hindu 'other'. The Ahmadiyya sect was rejected by mainstream Islam because they placed the finality of prophethood in doubt. But the brunt of hatred was generated by other more subliminal accusations. The Ahmadis (also known as 'Qadianis') were seen as a group of people who had done well in the middle-class professions and were unduly concerned with money and success; at the same time they were accused of wanting to take the joys of military *jihad* away from the Muslims by stressing that Qur'anic *jihad* was normally a peaceful struggle against the soul's base impulses. Revealingly, the most reviled Qadiani personality was Sir Choudhary Zafarullah Khan, Pakistan's foreign minister, who was accused of weakness.[43] The leaders of the agitation made a similar point when they depicted the son of the sect's founder, Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, as Mahatma Gandhi's homosexual lover – the biggest loss of masculine strength (and to a Hindu) imaginable.[44] The Ahmadiyya epitomized what Mashriqi (himself marginally involved in the 1953 riots) had identified as the main target of condemnation several decades earlier: a withdrawal from an ethics of war and an espousal of the benefits of the everyday.

The hunger for affective states of *rausch* was insatiable and could only be controlled by a combination of government repression and the temporary distractions of career building and money making; this happened in Pakistan with the installation of military dictatorship, in India – somewhat more benignly – with the consolidation of the Nehruvian regime. Suppression was unlikely to extinguish the power obsessions of the politics of self-expression, because it did not strike at the roots of the problem. The colonial state had become the main target of an anti-societal politics of abstract power because it was presenting itself at the same time as all powerful and as completely above the Indian social world. This was a myth, of course; there is good evidence that the Raj was always more 'limited' than it depicted itself.[45] But as a result of the pretence of an all-powerful, all-knowing Raj, social power was ideologically hidden – a fact most apparent in colonial conceptualizations of an unchanging, un-dynamic India where there was only a mosaic of exactly classifiable tribes, castes and religions, but no society in

the Western sense. The general colonial disregard of indigenous 'politicians' as an unrepresentative, ephemeral bunch was part of the same idea, as was the widespread perception that British administrators could never be corrupt.[46] For the colonialist, there was no politics in India, only good administration that saved Indians from perpetual warfare and self-destruction.

The middle-class milieu took this ideology more seriously than most. Many of its members owed their income and status to the Government. Unlike the indigenous elites, middle-class people did not enjoy alternative non-government forms and sources of power; unlike the working poor they did not have to face a plethora of humiliation and subordination of which suppression by government was only one relatively indistinct component. If the only source of power around is perceived to be the government, then the hunger for experiences of empowerment will focus on desires for and fetishizations of state power. General Ayub Khan and Prime Minister Nehru, despite their many differences, did very little to move their own regimes away from the colonial image of distant but omnipotent government. Their attempts of normalization by means of neutral state administration may have been successful in the short run. But the temptation to use synthetic and symbolic confrontations with government as a prop for self-empowerment by all sorts of political groups never really went away. Disputes over unused mosques and offensive publications are still very much part of South Asian politics today.

## The meaning of statehood

The combination of a politics desirous of continuous *rausch* with a fetishization of government as supreme source of power often led the politicians of self-expression into a somewhat nebulous advocacy of statehood. Some believed that the mere possession of *a* state would be the magic way of achieving true and perennial self-expression without being entirely clear about what a state actually was; others saw '*the S*tate' (with a capital 'S') somewhat more distinctly as a specific form of political methodology. It is important not to confuse this political language with a wholesale adoption of the arguments commonly associated with 'the state' in conventional political theory. Where the word itself was used in the discourse of self-expression, it meant something peculiar and potentially un-state-like.

Before we get to matters of theory it should be noted that there was also a problem of translation. The constraints of the Urdu language imposed its own limitations on what could and what could not be expressed through a language of statehood. Linguistic possibilities at the time simply offered no direct equivalent for 'the State', arguable not even for statehood more generally. All available terms – '*raj*', '*sarkar*', '*hukumat*', '*riyasat*' and '*mulk*' – were more concrete than 'state' and carried different connotations. '*Riyasat*' is used as 'State' in present-day Urdu, but meant self-governed territorial unit as part of a larger confederation at the time; it was specifically used for 'Princely State' (autonomous territories with an indigenous rulers but under British suzerainty) or 'state' as in 'United States

of America'. Both meanings implied a prosaic sense of sub-statehood and were exactly the opposite of what the politicians of self-expression were trying to achieve. '*Mulk*' or '*watan*' ('country', 'place of home') focused on territory and was the term with which the Congress press tried to brand the demand for Pakistan as geographically separate statehood;[47] an awareness of geographic separation was meant to put Muslims off Pakistan because the creation of such an entity would mean large-scale transfers of population. This was to no avail since territory was either entirely overlooked or regarded as secondary by the Muslim League activists fighting for Pakistan. '*Sarkar*' and '*hukumat*' both meant government, that is, something concrete, this-worldly and potentially oppressive, a collective term for the hated policeman, tax collector and judge rather than for the majestic 'state'. These terms were entirely unusable if the main message was to describe a political aspiration that was deliberately opposed to state power in the mundane sense of the politics of interest.

The term closest to what the politics of self-expression actually wanted to achieve was '*raj*' which roughly means 'rule' with an emphasis on the exercise of power. This is the term that colonial officials consistently employed to make sense of the conflict between different religious communities/nations; and which was echoed by the politicians of self-expression themselves. Pakistan was to be 'Muslim Raj', a free India was believed to be 'Hindu Raj' or 'Ram Raj', while the Sikh community also dreamed of but never achieved a 'Sikh Raj'.[48] Each term implied both the security of one community against rule by another, as well as the actual ability to rule others. *Raj* was part of a zero sum equation, cherished by its owners and feared by everybody else. The ability to experience power by ruling others was its very point. The clearly imperial ambition of *raj* stemmed from the fact that it was modelled along the lines of the British Raj. Its specific meaning derived from exactly the episodes of confrontation with the colonial government – over books, buildings and other zero-sum issues – described earlier.

It has often been argued – most consistently so by Ayesha Jalal – that the demand for Pakistan was left entirely unexplained until the very end, and that most Muslims supported it without really knowing what it was all about.[49] The ideologues of Pakistan said many things to different people and much of their propaganda was confined to poetic or religious allusions without any clear meaning. As Yasmin Khan has pointed out, it did not occur to many Muslims in UP that Pakistan was going to be an actual country that would leave them outside its new borders. Pakistan was simply anywhere where there were signs of a long, powerful and sophisticated Muslim presence; in UP eyes this had to include places like Lucknow or Rampur.[50]

This is all true enough, but only if Pakistan is understood in terms of statehood in the sense of a politics of interest. Pakistan as 'Muslim *Raj*' was crystal clear in its meaning: it would bring the joys of being free from being ruled by others, as well as the joy of ruling over others. The actual connection between Muslim *Raj* and territory was if at all only an epistemological device of secondary importance. Because *raj* was so closely related to power, it could exist wherever power

was exercised. The banning of a book could be Muslim *Raj*, as could be the appropriation of a building against the wishes of their owners, or the passing of any policy that clearly favoured Muslims over non-Muslims. *Raj* was having a flag that could be flown higher than the flag of other parties or communities; *raj* was wearing a particular uniform and reclaiming the street for a marching formation. Conversely, a Muslim having to sing *Bande Mataram* at school was suffering under Hindu *Raj*, as the UP Muslim League never tired of pointing out when listing the 'atrocities' of the provincial Congress government established after the 1937 elections.[51]

The use of *raj* to express the foremost goal of the politics of self-expression had several advantages. The logic of a zero-sum power contest implicit in the term offered a powerful lense through which all that went on in the world could be made congruent with the political vision of self-expression. Any action involving members of competing communities/nations could be seen as an act of wilful humiliation for humiliation's sake, even if no evidence for such intentions was present. This allowed radical nationalists to incorporate more old-fashioned socio-economic issues into the politics of self-expression. In 1946 Maulana Abdul Wahid, an Urdu publisher and journalist, expressed perceived career problems of Muslims at the Central Public Works Department, Delhi, in the language of the vernacular pleader:

> That Mr. C.D. Kapoor [the officer accused of anti-Muslim bias] (…) is taking most leading part on the consideration that the Interim *Government belongs to his community* and that *he can do injustice to the Muslim employees in whatever manner he likes*.[52]

This is a text-book description of what went on under the name of Hindu *Raj*: absolute power of one community/nation to do as they pleased against accepted social rules. Doing 'injustice' was the whole point of power. Power had to be transgressive in order to be truly untrammelled. The absence of normal rules of 'justice' furthermore implied a state of factual de-socialization that the politics of self-expression craved.

In a somewhat similar representation to the Indian government, this time involving the Ferozepore City Muslim League and allegations over ill-treatment of Muslim staff in the IEME Workshop, Ferozepore, the following point was made:

> Ever since the Establishment Branch has been taken over by Captain Harbans Lall [another officer accused of bias] (…) the workshop has become *a despot's Hindu kingdom*. He being in charge of administration *has transformed the branch into a complete Hindu State*.[53]

This illustrates again that the language of statehood had little precise meaning beyond the matter of power over others – how else could a workshop otherwise

be a 'State' with capital 'S'. The actual cases brought to the attention of the authorities involved both concrete bread-and-butter issues such as promotions and hiring policy, as well as more imponderable aspects of the exercise of power. An example of the latter was the following complaint:

> On the day when INA people were released, [one] Hans Raj Sukhdev *abused* the Muslims and the Muslim League in the office for not helping the men of the Indian National Army and *this injured the feelings* of other Muslim Staff. Nobody could stop him from saying this as he was putting up the E.O. [the aforementioned "Hindu despot"].[54]

This was a matter of honour, power and loyalty. Many Muslims in Urdu-using North India, including the lower middle-class clerks and workmen involved in this case, developed a great admiration for Subhas Chandra Bose and the INA, because the latter represented a state of empowerment vis-à-vis the British Raj. The accused Hindu workman sought nothing else but to separate them from the very feeling of empowerment that even a posthumous involvement with Bose's cause would bring. This amounted to a complex 'transfer' of power through symbolic contestation. By being able to insult his Muslim co-workers due to his protection by a superior Hindu officer, Hans Raj Sukhdev did not only take Bose's reflected power away from them, but also appropriated and fortified it for himself and his community. The terminology of statehood is entirely appropriate within the logic of self-expressionism; as soon as the Muslim side could no longer appeal to the colonial government to redress such imbalances of power, 'Hindu Raj' had indeed been established in the workshop.

When instances like this were picked up by middle-class activists, conventional trade union issues were transformed into Sorelian politics of self-expression. By reducing each and every conflict of everyday life into a symbolic contest over abstract power, the politicians of self-expression made such conflicts irresolvable; simultaneously they could feed their hunger for experiences of power *rausch* by tapping into existing local resentment. Although we have no independent source to confirm this, it is very likely that the Muslim workmen in whose name the complaint to government was launched could be persuaded to buy into such a de-societalization of their grievances.

At a more theoretical level of description, the meaning of the 'state' within the discourse of self-expression can best be approximated as a metaphor that expressed in political language the desire to overcome the ultimate constraint of *rausch* – temporality itself. As an experience in the present, a state of ex-stasis from society was always limited in time. But the joys of *rausch* were kept alive in memories of past confrontations (what George Sorel would call 'the myth' of power) and anticipations of similar states in the future. The 'State' was a name – or more commonly a set of images – that denoted the wish that there may be a time when *rausch* would no longer have to end, when total bliss and salvation had finally come to stay. This made it very difficult to put one's finger on what such

a State would actually look like. Thinking about the State – in the sense of *rausch* totalized and made permanent – had the same trappings as thinking about death. One can get as far as envisioning life coming to an end, but one cannot really come to grips with the great void beyond. Similarly, the self-expressionists could envision the cherished moment when society finally released its grip over being, but they could never get to know what a permanent state of de-societalization itself would mean. This is a general problem when thinking about salvation as an absence: it is always defined by that which is to be absent, and thereby inherently throws the imagination back to presence. The state was a fleeting image at the very margins of the possibility of political imagination, emerging at the point when thought itself becomes impossible. At this very moment the state as source of miraculous and ultimate power swung into action and simultaneously acted as society's executioner and its temporary stand-in. Just before entering perennial and total annihilation in *rausch*, the projecting imagination of self-expressionism saw a penultimate perfect glimpse of the national soul having come totally into its own. The state was a perfect image where the nation had been transformed into an aesthetically pleasing and entirely conflict-free edifice.

It should be clear that this 'State' had very little utility as a concept of political action or analysis. The self-expressionist State was forever a construct of the future that in actual fact undermined the deployment of state-centred solutions in the present. No actual existing 'state' could ever match up with the State as the metaphor for the blissful moment of total liberation.

References to 'the State' (with a capital 'S') represented an often superficial appropriation of the political language of developmentalism that was propagated by Nehruvian circles in the 1940s, and imperfectly copied by the Muslim League. In this discourse 'the State' was shorthand for large-scale government agency to affect societal change – a vision that was at least in theory a good deal more concrete, present oriented and society aware than self-expressionism. In practice, the actual societal orientation of developmentalism was always limited by grandiose abstraction. The more comprehensive and radical the development plans, the more likely they were to become pieces of empty rhetoric without much concrete applicability.[55] When the Muslim League, for instance, established a Planning Committee in imitation of the Congress 'Bombay Plan', there is little evidence that they really appreciated what planning was all about; the Committee had no immediate political influence and it took independent Pakistan another decade to engage (again superficially) with doctrines of state-centred development.[56] Abstraction, grandiosity and other forms of obfuscation made it easy for the practitioners of self-expressionism to adopt the language of developmentalism while maintaining an essentially anti-societal understanding of politics.

The communist-turned-Muslim Leaguer Danial Latifi offered a particularly poignant translation of the language of self-expression into the language of statist development. The prevailing flavour of the Pakistan movement – at least for the Urdu middle-class milieu – was one of emotional voluntarism and poetic images of intoxication. Latifi's famous 1944 *Punjab Muslim League Manifesto* appeared

very different. The tone was sober but not devoid of commitment and élan; the subject matter was societal in the sense that it dealt with questions of economic and social policy. This was a 'proper' political programme, not an invocation of the *khumestan* a la Maulana Zafar Ali Khan. Latifi promised that under Muslim League rule things would change for the better: the enterprising middle classes would find an environment of fairness and meritocracy; the oppressed an end to oppression; the disadvantaged would receive government interference in their favour; there were to be employment programmes, there was to be an end to patronage politics.[57] The rhetorical punch of this programme relied on a continuous and consistent juxtaposition of 'government' to 'the State'. The former was an incarnation of evil, described as 'soulless bureaucratic rule and (…) intolerable oppression by the petty agents of the bureaucracy.'[58] The latter was the much-invoked image of future goodness. There are no less than seven pages in the short *Manifesto* on which 'the State' is mentioned as a universal saviour four or five times over.[59] Latifi tried to trump government as it was concretely experienced by most Indians with an abstract concept of power. The nature of 'the State' directly resembled the nature of the national being as conceptualized by the politics of self-expression. The State was entirely non-societal; it was seen to float majestically above particular social interests and had actual social beings – the petty officials – edited out of its image. Strangely but entirely revealingly, Latifi suggested that despite its extreme abstractness 'the State' had a 'soul'. The beneficial actions of the State came from some spiritual essence within itself, not from interactions with the outside world. When this non-societal but spiritual monad had swung into action all the conflicts that defined society – class, economic exploitation, respect and status differentials – would cease to exist. The State was the alter ego of national being and in good time the two would merge to form a perfectly ordered and conflict-free world.

The State in this vision was the grand agency that had to despatch society at the very moment of transition to perennial freedom. The State's willingness to use regimes of discipline and restraint had to match the anticipated liberation in their abstractness and totality. This is why many prophets of self-expression believed that a desirable state had to be a dictatorship. Subhas Chandra Bose famously wanted to base a new India on a synthesis of 'communism [or socialism] and fascism' which he called '*Samyavada*'.[60] This meant that all repressive and interventionist systems available in his time were deployed in order to achieve a state of being where every conceivable conflict between different socio-economic, religious, political or other groupings had been extinguished. The deployment of maximum restraining force would crush society so that differences and contradictions no longer came in the way of the self-expression of the national soul. Bose's totalitarian fantasies were echoed in the Muslim League camp. Abdus Sattar Khan Niazi, one of the authors of the *Scheme*, for instance, wrote in an imploring letter to Jinnah: 'The demand for Pakistan is a demand for a State. And modern States can only be maintained by a totalitarian policy. Even England is realizing that.'[61] This was the view of many middle-class activists in the League.

As always carefully calibrating his message to the expectations of his followers, the *Qaid-e-Azam* stressed on several occasions that Pakistan could not be a democracy – although being Jinnah, he sometimes maintained the opposite as well.[62]

The frenzied demands for *a* state – heightened further in intensity by making it a 'dictatorship' – concealed the basic fact that radical self-expressionists often reached a point where the language of statehood disintegrated altogether. Both Savarkar and Mashriqi, for instance, were clearly interested in the state with all their emphasis on armies, radio stations and other typical paraphernalia of government. But generally speaking, they could not really believe in 'the State' as a concept. Although their political aims included a total liberation and perfection of mankind, there is a sense that, at the end of the day, they did not pay too much attention to the most distant margins of their utopian vision. The moment of death of society was longed for, but disappeared behind an emphasis on the process that would bring it about. This is why the ideological vision of self-expression so often remained one of movement. Like the authors of the *Scheme*, Mashriqi believed that a Muslim state in South Asia could never be more than a temporary encampment of the Muslim national army. The task was to conquer the whole world, but this final prize somehow paled in significance in comparison to the imagination of war itself. The reason behind his inconsistency was the matter of power. Any form of final de-societalized state would make the exercise of power unnecessary. The grandeur of the application of total power to crush society at the threshold of temporality was in a way better than the passing into a perennial state of bliss itself. Since only coercion gave the activists of self-expression the feeling of empowerment that they so craved, a final resolution of all conflict was not really what they were after.

## Controlling the inner nation

The self-determined 'state' that nationalists envisioned in the future was concretized by a state of power *rausch*, occasioned by demonstrations, communal violence, parades in paramilitary uniforms and the consumption of intoxicating poetry. *Rausch* is a condition based on culturally constructed ways of recognizing and cultivating 'sensations' that are experienced in both mind and body. Muslim League popular propagandists captured the individual corporeal experiences of their political aspiration in poetic anticipations of what 'Pakistan' would be like. They spoke of 'breaking the chains' around their 'hearts' or of the feeling of 'flying high'.[63] The present – 'Pakistan's' opposite – was explicitly associated with recognized psychosomatic symptoms of depression. Another description of Pakistan employed the word '*chain*' which denotes a range of positive, but vague psychosomatic states such as 'ease, relief, tranquillity, comfort', the common element being the absence or cessation of negative pressures on body and mind. It made perfect sense that Muhammad Ali Jinnah was described as a 'miracle cure' ('*tilismat*') for the Muslim predicament; the same word was used in advertising

discourse to sell nostrums and patent medicines against any conceivable form of stress and corporeal 'weakness'.[64] By translating political issues into (by definition) individual states of pain and illness, the politicians of self-expression could promise a political solution to a range of complaints that went far beyond what is commonly understood as 'political'. A range of supposedly 'private' and non-political issues – unhappiness in family relationships, or pressure at work or school, for instance – could be similarly reduced to depressive states and then be amalgamated with the 'grief' felt about the loss of Muslim grandeur or the 'pangs' of unemployment.[65] The new politics offered all-out salvation, all-out healing, not simply the removal of specific grievances through the conventional tools of political negotiation and compromise. Pain and depression were non-negotiable. Their remedy had to be sought in the manipulation of bodies and minds, not at round-table conferences.

The easy translation of individual emotions into collective political concerns (and vice versa) was facilitated by the presence of a particular language of politics that was awash with corporeal metaphors. The nation as a concept of European political thought was originally conceived in analogy to the self-determined person.[66] Radical nationalists in South Asia pushed this metaphorical transposition from the individual to the collective into a hardened anthropomorphism. For Subhas Chandra Bose the Indian nation had a 'soul'. V.D. Savarkar believed that the Hindu nation was an 'organic being' complete with 'veins'. In Inayatullah Khan Mashriqi's inimitable words, the Muslim nation lacked political strength because it was 'overtaxed and infirm like an old man after copulation.'[67] This language of corporeality was only superficially related to metaphors of the 'body politic' that had long been available in South Asia and many other parts of the world.[68] The old idea that a polity could be compared to an organism, in which various parts interact in a relationship of harmonious interdependence, targeted a level of explanation that can be equated with the societal (albeit somewhat anachronistically); the leading question is the social division of labour, and the emphasis rests on interplay and communication between different social constituencies. These were not the concerns of the politicians of self-expression. The latter were interested in how political monads could express their homogenous internal essences. This was to take place in an arena in which interdependence of functions or social communication were conspicuously relegated or absent. Organism became a metaphor that detracted from, rather than focused on the internal constitution of political entities.

The language of nationalism had consequences for the conduct of politics. Once the equivalence of individual and nation was accepted, individual ethics could be effortlessly proposed as collective political solutions. The authors of the *Scheme* expressed a prevailing opinion when they argued that a nation full of 'faith-power' (*inami taqat*) had nothing to fear from the material superiority of less faith-powered suppressor nations.[69] The trouble with such statements was that – in practice – individual ethics could only be observed in individual human beings. A nation not having the requisite 'faith power' to survive could only

mean that the individual members of this nation had let the collective down. In consequence, the slippage between the individual and the collective gave rise to an often fanatical will to control each and every member of the nation. If the survival of the nation depended on individual virtues such as faith, will-power or moral rectitude, then the inner world of everyone in the collective had to be policed in order to secure national survival. The national struggle was thus reformulated as a struggle within the individual self. Once again, by breaking down any distinction between an imaginary national politics and the directly experienced state of the individual person, the politics of self-expression made the private political and the political private.

Radical self-expressionists were not the only ones to rely strongly on individualistic methodologies in order to achieve collectivist goals. Somewhat similar modes of argument were used by other nationalists and in new forms of Islamic orthodoxy. Although the boundaries between these and 'proper' self-expressionism are not always easy to draw, the different degree of anti-societalism can serve as the most important distinguishing feature. Both Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi and 'fundamentalist' Muslims such as Abul Ala Maududi believed that their respective communities could not flourish without living up to the moral rules laid down by their respective religions. If the community/nation was afflicted by misery and historical decay, the blame had to lie with the moral failings of their individual members. For the *Mahatma*, for instance, the devastating earthquake in Quetta was a divine punishment for the sin of untouchability.[70] Maududi believed that the Muslim *ummat* had a historic mission to demonstrate the moral superiority of the Islamic way of life to mankind. This project was rooted in the individual observance of God's law – the *shari*$^{c}$*at* – in all aspects of life, both individual and collective. Individual contravention of divine law was treason to the national/communal collective and could be held responsible for the deplorable state of the *ummat*.[71] But it is important that both Maududi's and Gandhi's notion of private morality included 'societal' issues; much of it was about how to relate to one's fellow human beings in economic transactions, personal relationships and social communication more generally. Where the two men differed was the exact methodology to achieve collective rectitude; for Gandhi it lay in moral proselytizing based on setting a personal example, for Maududi (especially in his later years) in the use of governmental sanctions against delinquent individuals.

A concern for the societal was also paramount in Muhammad Ali Jinnah's suggestion that 'Pakistan' started with students being meticulous in their studies and with ordinary Muslims cleaning up their rubbish after them.[72] Similar demands had been the staple of Indian 'liberalism' in the age of 'constructive nationalism' most en vogue in the period before the First World War.[73] Again, the point was that national regeneration had to start with societal regeneration rooted in individual good conduct. This was an argument quite distinct from the politics of self-expression; the focus on social reconstruction was based on the realization that national regeneration needed time, that it had to start at the local level and

with small steps. The message was that every small contribution helped, and that activists should not despair over their inability to engage in large-scale political action.

The politicians of self-expression operated in a very different mental universe. Their world was inherently pessimistic and insecure. They did not possess the strong belief in the ultimate invincibility of virtue that helped people like Maududi, Gandhi or the Indian 'liberals' to adopt a patient and long-term attitude towards political action. For the prophets of self-expression, their respective collectives were in a state of apocalyptic war and the possibility of total extinction was never far from the temporal horizon. The existence of ulterior values beyond the survival of the fittest was either completely denied, as in Savarkar, or, at least, severely doubted, as in Mashriqi and other Muslim versions of this *weltanschauung*. There was no time here for moral regeneration. The social Darwinism of the self-expressionists produced a strangely collapsed view of temporality. While asserting that Hindus, Muslims or Indians had to prove their mettle in cosmic battle, the prophets of self-expression also liked to believe that the true nature of their respective communities/nations was already predetermined. After all, national essences were basically unchanging; they only had to be 'expressed' or 'unfolded' in history. In this sense, the battle for survival was always already decided; performance in the present served as an *ex post factum* affirmation of essential being. Somewhat akin to the Calvinist doctrine of election and its 'revelation' in economic prosperity, one could never know for sure whether one's national community was bound for victory or extinction; but one could make oneself believe that all was well as long as the members of a nation did not lose their ability to fight. Such thinking was desperately dangerous for political activists who also believed that their respective communities/nations were in a deep crisis exemplified by the colonial presence. By all accounts, they were *not* part of the meta-historically 'elect'; all that remained was the hope that a gargantuan effort at the last minute may browbeat historical reality into revealing the opposite.

This radicalized the demands that the need for collective survival could make on individual conduct. Since the unfolding of the national essence was achieved through battle, this battle had to be fought unceasingly within each and every member of the community. Only by continuously engaging in some sort of conflict could it be proved that the national essence possessed the ability to be victorious. A state of internal war was not a deplorable part of human frailty, but became a value in its own right. This was very different from more conventional religious (or liberal educationalist) ideas of the human 'battle' against sin (or backwardness) in order to prosper in a moral universe. People like Maududi, for instance, recognized that it was not always easy to follow God's law; but they also believed that with a little goodwill (and a helping hand from the coercive state) everybody was capable of doing so. Ignoring the *shari*$^{c}$*at* was an act of wickedness, a deliberate refusal to submit to divine command. For the self-expressionists, in contrast, there was little possibility to end internal struggle; more precisely, such an end

was not even desirable. The ultimate justification of individual existence was to prove at every step and through the deliberate *valorization* of internal conflict that the national persona could be deemed to survive in never-ending warfare. Falling short of this yardstick was not mere wickedness, but existential *failure* that could only be viewed with the utmost contempt.

The key difference between self-expressionist politicizations of the inner world of individuals and their religious or liberal equivalents was that the former validated states of being whereas the latter concentrated on moral deeds and virtues. The self-expressionist activists were morally and existentially legitimate when they *felt* that there was a battle raging within and that this battle generated a sensation of power. The assumption was that the harder the battle, the greater this feeling of power and the greater the likelihood that one's nation would be victorious; at the same time, the experience of the severity of struggle propelled the activists towards the ultimate goal – absolution in a generalized state of *rausch*. As was pointed out earlier, there were certain political experiences that could immediately generate such a state of being, for instance, participation in mass protest that focused on confrontation with a recognized source of power such as the colonial state. But these confrontations were only possible episodically; there were always long troughs of hated inactivity between periods of mass mobilization. In the eyes of the self-expressionist activists the battle for survival never stopped. Prolonged subjection to the routines of ordinary middle-class life was denying them an opportunity to prove and experience that they were still up to the fight; worse, everyday life activated sensations in them that ate away at their desired feeling of power. The battle for collective survival was really not against enemy community/nations, but against everyday existence itself.

## Political masochism

The political organizations of self-expression had to create opportunities in which the cosmic battle against the everyday could be experienced even when no large-scale political confrontation with others was available. The emphasis on states of being as political goals made experiences of corporeality a central concern of political practice. The activists of self-expression concentrated on the artificial creation of 'inner struggles' through the deliberate infliction of negative sensations such as hardship and pain on their bodies. Feelings of elation and euphoria could then be experienced as the cessation of these negatives. The magic methodology to achieve the aims of perennial self-expression consisted in strict regimes of physical discipline and training that all paramilitary movements of the time period advocated.[74]

The Khaksars offer the most pronounced example of what may be called, with little exaggeration, political sadomasochism. Khaksar activism was, according to Mashriqi, the means 'to make the Khaksar bold and fearless, to wear down his fat soul, to straighten his obstinate and proud self and to make his self the prize of the world by rendering it obedient.'[75] Corporeal adjectives such as 'fat' and 'straight'

indicate that, in this context, 'self' does not mean the mind as much as corporeal reflexes. The very activities to which this quote was linked were in themselves aimed primarily at the body; although called 'social work' in Khaksar idiom, they consisted invariably in heavy physical activity such as road building or dam maintenance.

Mashriqi not only prescribed a weekly programme of drill, military exercise and 'social work',[76] but also insisted on a deliberately harsh regime of corporeal punishments. Smoking without permission and unsatisfactory standards of personal hygiene were seen as grave offences. Anybody who arrived at the weekly training session late was publicly flogged.[77] The stated target of these assaults was the un-martial mental and physical condition produced by everyday life, often described as 'torpor' or 'listlessness' by authors such as Mashriqi or Ghulam Jilani Barq.[78] The Indian body – it was believed – had an inbuilt tendency to avoid any kind of action unless it was forced, leading to all sorts of unspecific forms of dis-ease. The infliction of physical pain in collective rituals of castigation made the malaise of middle-class existence manageable. The sharpness of the whiplash spoke louder than the creeping complaints arising from everyday life; the endurance of sharp pain instigated a positive experience of inner struggle; the fading of the same pain offered a premonition of the liberation to come.

There was a second aspect that made physical castigation a core practice of Khaksar politics. As Mashriqi himself pointed out in one of his pamphlets, the significance of flogging for unpunctuality was the annihilation of social differences. One of the most commented-upon cases of such punishment was meted out to a senior (and relatively wealthy) Khaksar 'officer'. This was meant to demonstrate to everybody that a person's rank or status was insignificant in the battle for national survival.[79] The point was strengthened by the fact that in the North Indian context, unpunctuality was (and is) commonly perceived as a deliberate demonstration of power. In salaried middle-class eyes, being late had become a symbol of the undeserved and irrational privileges enjoyed by 'lazy' landowning and business elites. Even where they were directed against the travails of middle-class existence, Khaksar programmes of self-castigation remained decidedly middle-class in character.

In communist circles, similar concerns were expressed – much less directly and with more theoretical flourish – as the need to 'declass' oneself. Although Marxism–Leninism (unlike most nationalisms) was strongly aware of the socio-economic foundations of politics, it ran into difficulties when the class position that the activists inherited from their families was in contradiction to the interests of the proletariat. This problem was particularly acute in places like Lahore, Aligarh and Lucknow where many members of the CPI belonged to the upper echelons of the service stratum or even to the land-owning or business elites. In order to become authentic spokespersons of the working class, comrades of an upper-class origin had to have their social identities obliterated. Marxist thought had linked social identities to relationships with means of production. This meant that de-classing would have to involve the critique and change of social relationships

in all their complexity. But middle-class Marxism conveniently simplified the problem by reducing social identities to differences in living standards. In a typical movement of de-socialization the latter could be further reduced to questions of physical comfort. Comrades who slept on the floor, possessed only one change of clothes and could subsist on the supposedly inedible *dal roti* of the peasantry were greatly admired as being truly declassed.[80] Once again, political ethics had zeroed in on the individual body, as the infliction and endurance of corporeal discomfort became an act of political liberation.

For some communist activists 'declassing themselves' through regimes of pain became a life long obsession. Mian Nizam Din, a veteran CPI cadre of small landowning background who began his career in a terrorist group is a good example.[81] Even as an octogenerian he refused to use hot water for bathing at any time, including winter; he slept on a wooden platform without a mattress and insisted that his own austere room has never been whitewashed – all because the oppressed do not have such luxuries either. But the connection between 'de-classing' and castigating the body is expressed most strongly in the following episode, which occurred in the mid-1930s. A multi-religious group of college students of Attock in North-Western Punjab – Nizam Din amongst them – decided to form a terrorist organization to avenge the hanging of Bhagat Singh. After gathering at a safe house they decided to impose a membership test to divide the revolutionary grain from the middle-class chaff. Every contender had to hold his elbow over a candle flame. Only the ones who could endure the pain for a considerable time were allowed to proceed with the formation of the cell.

The stated reason behind the exercise was to test out one's ability to survive government torture. The interrogation centre at Lahore Fort was notorious for the application of 'third degree methods'[82] that according to leftwing folklore only Bhagat Singh was able to withstand. But the deliberate rehearsal of pain by activists such as Nizam Din, suggests that colonial brutality was almost welcomed as a purifying experience. Imprisonment under harsh conditions became a badge of honour and a living proof that political commitment was truly able to overrule the body's inbuilt love of ease. Radical nationalists usually requested to be categorized as C-class prisoners, so that they could share the severe conditions of incarceration, which were reserved for inmates of low social status – a request, which was often denied by the colonial courts, who understood that they could de-legitimize young activists of rich backgrounds by allowing them the relative comfort of A-class imprisonment.

At times, there was little difference between communist and rightwing nationalist formulations of corporeal methodologies. Under the excited title 'Fragments from a guerrilla diary', activist Rajbans Kishen described the experience at a CPI training camp in Lahore for the party organ People's War. His account included the following passage:

> 4 a.m. The bugle rings out sharp and clear piercing the stillness of the night. 300 spring from their beds, as one man. (…) Roll up your beds,

> clean your teeth, wash yourselves, put on your uniform, gulp down your tea. – Fall in Line. Fall in! Quick! Quick! There isn't a moment to lose. Our motherland is threatened.[83]

Again the process of political organization begins with a deliberately unpleasant assault on the torpid comfort of the middle-class body; the 'sharp' and 'piercing' interruption of sleep, followed by rituals of orderliness and hygiene. The result is the production of 300 purified (physical) bodies that could then be merged into the national body by means of military formation. Such a vision would have been shared in its entirety by a member of the Khaksars, the RSS or any other paramilitary volunteer organization of the time.

What distinguished M.K. Gandhi from the aforementioned propagators of the politics of self-expression was (amongst other things) his extremism. Although he was entirely in favour of inflicting hardship and pain against one's own body – negating sexuality, fasting, strict rules of austerity in dress, travel and daily life – he famously disallowed violence against others. This was nothing else than a further tightening of the disciplinary regime to which the body was already subjected. In general, castigating the body was meant to purify the physical body from its reflexive inertia, sexuality, irrationality and so on. But castigation through violence against oneself was prone to institute the desire for violence against others as a new emotional reflex. For most advocates of the politics of self-expression this was either accepted as a safety valve, or even a positively desirable political asset. Not so for Gandhi; for him the screw had to be tightened further; more disciplinary violence had to be exercised against the already violated body to make it non-violent. This could only create extreme emotional distress, which is reflected in the passionate hatred that many non-Gandhian's felt for the doctrine of *ahimsa*. While some rightwing Hindu Congressites simply begged on their knees to be allowed to be violent,[84] Mashriqi starkly advocated violence against non-violence in the name of sanity: 'Non-violent people must be stamped out from the face of the world. Non-violence is unnatural.'[85] Similar pronouncements could be heard elsewhere in radical Muslim circles.[86]

The desire for militarist restraint and for experiences of physical pain have to be seen as the flipside of the desire for the states of intoxication that were described as a major characteristic of the politics of self-expression. *Rausch* is a relational experience that only makes sense when contrasted with its 'other', the confines of everyday life.[87] The full power of *rausch* cannot be experienced without tasting the full power of restraint. A fetishization of *rausch* required the fetishization of restraint; it had to be heightened from its ordinary forms into the extreme political sadomasochism described earlier. The politics of pain was central to the wider aims of the politics of self-expression. The assault on the body, often self-directed and politically prescribed, was an act of individualization and de-socialization *par excellence*. Pain addressed the physical body directly, deliberately bypassing the individual as a socially networked and constructed person. The Khaksar whip, the RSS military obstacle course and

communist sleep-deprivation were all ways of suppressing established social hierarchies as well as caste, *biradari* and family loyalties. Society was first internalized and then fought in the symbolic guise of the body's nether impulses. By combating the unwelcome emotional reflexes of their bodies, activists were in reality extirpating their social selves. The attack on the body was nothing else than the rage against middle-class life mentioned in other chapters, but now directed inwards. Experiences of pain and hardship were cherished because they marked a state of being that was simultaneously more immediately corporeal (and hence 'natural') and more 'authentically' collective than life in society; political activists who shared strongly physical rituals such as self-torture over a candle flame became organically and intimately connected; their bond must have appeared superior to the societal ties based on a complex division of labour or the economic relationships associated with capitalist exchange. In regimes of self-castigation the societal being became a pseudo-biological member of the primordial family that Savarkar amongst others, invoked in his writings. This was the micro-political concretization of the much-voiced idea that war was both a creator of a new brotherhood and an opportunity to give the natural and heroic impulses of men free reign.

This explanation differs somewhat from the standard line suggested in the existing literature. Many authors have suggested that the prevalence of corporeal regimes in South Asia is best explained with reference to the needs of nationalist organization.[88] There is undeniable mileage in this argument. Nationalist politics in a colonial setting was about the demonstration of the collective will of a 'representative' section of the colonized people vis-à-vis their foreign rulers. Representativeness required visibility, and – in the context of twentieth-century politics – the mobilization of 'the masses'. Large numbers, more than anything else, concretized the idea of a 'national' will. Nationalist elites had to reach out to at least some section of the 'little people' in order to be credible, but at the same time they had to make sure that the crowd did not make unhelpful noises of their own. Not only would this undermine the nationalist elites' role as sole spokesmen of the national destiny, it would also make consistent and strategic negotiations with the colonialists impossible.

The kind of disciplinary regimes practised by paramilitary volunteer movements can be seen as a somewhat extreme way to simultaneously 'discipline and mobilize' the lower orders in the interests of nationalist politics. The Khaksars and the RSS practised outright cults of obedience to their leaders, while similar ideas were expressed in Congress and Muslim League volunteer organizations in a somewhat milder form. Members of such movements had their individual will obliterated through regimes of (self-)castigation and became pliable instruments in the hands of their leaders. They became the kind of national 'soldiers' that virtually all movements in the 1930s and 1940s constantly invoked in their political discourse. These 'soldiers' could then act as disciplining agents of wider sections of the population; for instance, as stewards at mass meetings, self-appointed security guards at *melas* and fairs, or as 'body guards' of their leaders. It can be argued

that such disciplinary regimes were a way of controlling and thereby utilizing the power of the subaltern classes that made up the majority of India's population. The Khaksars, Muslim League National Guards and Congress volunteers (less so the RSS and the Communists) did attract members from the lower orders of society – urban artisans, farmers and peasants who were easily swayed by the sense of dignity that a uniform bestowed on its wearer. Their subjection to disciplinary regimes in volunteer training camps was a way of extirpating their unkempt and unruly 'subaltern' nature and to remodel them according to middle-class ideas of 'proper' behaviour. The need for hygiene, punctuality and thrift – all highlighted in every volunteer organization – is an obvious point in case.

The problem with such explanations is that they revert back into the instrumentalist logic of the politics of interest, according to which all political action happens for specific aims formulated by an elite leadership. This may well be correct in the case of wider nationalist movements under the sway of organizers who were on their way to becoming stake-holding politicians of interest. As far as the politics of self-expression is concerned, the 'discipline and mobilize' argument imputes too great a conventional will to power on the part of middle-class activists. This ignores the fact that – although middle-class ideologues may have noisily invoked the wish to discipline the entire world – it was really the middleclass activists themselves who were the most enthusiastic recipients of their own regimes of self-castigation. We are dealing with an *obsession* with discipline that was not the response to a lack of discipline in middle-class life, but connected to the *hatred* for societal forms of restraint. Middle-class people longed for states of de-societalization that replicated much of the 'naturalness' and 'authenticity' of the lower social orders that disciplinary regimes would destroy. Put more bluntly, the interesting point about people like Mashriqi (and his willing victims) is the flogging rather than the punctuality that would result from such 'punishment'. Discourses of disciplining the body were appropriated by the self-expressionists because they could become a stimulant of the 'inner struggle' that was needed to connect a political vision based on social Darwinism with individual psychosomatic symptoms. Regimes of discipline became magic rituals because they could be made to encapsulate simultaneously what being middle class was all about *and* the frenzied struggle to exorcise the very same middle class-ness from the activists' bodies.

## Conclusion

This chapter has offered a reconstruction of the politics of self-expression that does not attempt to rationalize it in the usual fashion of a politics of interest. When taken seriously, the aim of anti-societalism identifies the emergence and autonomy of a new form of politics. Self-expressionist pamphleteers did not write to convince their co-religionists of the complex logic of the grand imperial numbers game of majorities and minorities; they wrote because this offered them a vehicle for tasting empowerment and for stirring the soul of others similarly

inclined. Self-expressionist poets did not compose verse because they wanted to explain complex political ideas to the illiterate masses; they wrote because they felt that the beauty of their compositions was in itself already a step towards national liberation, an image of a national future that could be consumed as an object of art. Self-expressionist crowds did not attack police cordons or members of rival political groups because they wanted to defend the material self-interest of patronage networks and other pressure groups, but because collective action generated a state of intoxication in which the activist was simultaneously freed from society and re-emerged in a new and non-societal form of brotherhood. When self-expressionists spoke of the 'State' – if they were able to do so within their linguistic capabilities – they did not mean the state as an organ of control, but a state of power, seen as the faint vision of a better but unreachable future, in which society itself would finally be overcome. When they spoke of the 'nation', they did not mean a country mobilized for the purpose of achieving a new status accorded by international law, but the total merger of all individual bodies and souls into a collective organism ready for the glories of apocalyptic battle; a total unity, in the context of which even the slightest sign of individual weakness and deviance would amount to existential failure. Finally, when the activists and prophets of self-expression engaged in rigid regimes of corporeal control, they did not simply do so in order to create a new citizenry fit for the modern state, or in order to maintain clear lines of political control, but because they viewed acts of political masochism as cathartic experiences that got them closer to their cherished goal of a life without societal constraints.

Taken on its own terms, the politics of self-expression could – in the most literal sense of the word – be spectacularly successful. The emphasis on individual states of elation and depression facilitated the supersession and amalgamation of any amount of individual grievances. The results were great and very visible upheavals in the streets of the North Indian cities. Paramilitary movements with relatively few members – for instance the Khaksars – could unnerve the security services and enthral the imagination of large urban populations. If the aim of the new politics was the demonstration and expression of inner states of feeling, its activists did very well on both accounts. Their actions were witnessed and contemplated over and over again in the press, in public deputations and political speeches. Self-expressionism was a politics fit for the society of the spectacle – a point that the last two chapters of this book will argue out in some detail. But the very source of success – the ability to allow every participant in collective action to associate their own private miseries and joys with a large collective – also made the politics of self-expression singularly ineffective in terms of any form of politics other than itself. Self-expressionists could demonstrate but they could not develop a very clear sense of what exactly they were demonstrating for. In a sense, the answer to such a question was obvious to them – the desire for empowerment of a national collective; but this is a far cry from the more clear-cut objectives of other forms of collective action – working class or peasant politics with their protocols and conventions for instance.

The fatal flaw in the politics of self-expression was its striking individualism, although it was usually subsumed into a rhetoric of organic nationalism. Precisely because there was such an easy transition between the collective and the individual soul, it was possible for the activists to understand their own inner worlds as synonymous with the larger collective. The erasure of the individual will that most forms of self-expressionist political practice advocated, was really a totalization of individual self-hood to the point where it literally contained the entire world. The individualistic streak in the politics of self-expression can be attributed to the social being of its most ardent adherents: the marginalized middle classes in the 'advanced' provinces of India. Middle-class culture was in itself confined in an individualistic paradigm. As the next chapter will demonstrate, the middle-class person knew and felt his or her middle class-ness in the marrows of their bones and the deepest recesses of their soul; but the same person did not perceive any collective identity that could provide a basis for class action. The very concept of class is impossible in political thought that refuses to recognize the importance of the societal.

# 3

# A CLASS OF BODIES

The anti-societal vision of the politics of self-expression was the result of an obsessive focus on the inner worlds of individuals, and of the conflation of these worlds with an imagined universe of meta-historical collectivities. This chapter is the first instalment of an enquiry into why middle-class people in North India were particularly prone to such forms of reductionism. Following in the footsteps of a 'sociology of knowledge', this book moves from an exposition of the political culture of self-expression to a survey of the wider socio-cultural milieu where such a political culture originated. The basic assumption is that lofty concepts such as interiority and self-hood have a firm basis in hard material realities; not in the sense of the inevitable pursuit of gain so favoured by the politics of interest, but more immediately and literally because selves do not exist for themselves, they dwell in bodies that perspire, digest, have sex and die. Central to the investigation is the matter of class, a form of social consciousness that was said to pervade the politics of self-expression, but – thanks to the prevalence of anti-societal modes of thought – did not find any clear form of articulation.

At first glance, there is perhaps nothing surprising in the connection between being middle class and being obsessed with inner struggles. Marxist commentators have long denounced individualism as a particularly 'bourgeois' vice. After all it was the liberal fiction of the free wage contract between legal individuals that made possible the subordination of labour under capital. A similar point is addressed in a different theoretical framework by one of Michel Foucault's great arguments. He suggested that under the conditions of capitalist modernity people are controlled by means of 'bio-power'. Modern regimes of power do not focus so much on the sovereign power over life and death, but depend on the regulation of people's living bodies and minds, their sexuality, health, sanity and labour. In this context, the bourgeois ruling class has to demonstrate its ability to rule through regimes of *self*-control; hence it became imperative to promote methods of disciplining the inner workings of body and soul.[1] This emphasis on bourgeois body mastery resonates with the regimes of castigation so central to self-expressionist individualism. But the obsessive shrillness, the exaggerated pathos and other strange contortions in the self-culture of the Urdu middle-class milieu caution against an easy application of a universal logic of capitalist modernity.

It must not be forgotten that the social constituency in question was *not* a ruling class – not even a ruling class in waiting – but a socio-cultural milieu that was denied an autonomous political existence.

The present investigation into matters of class and body has attempted to preserve the idiosyncratic nature of North Indian material culture as far as possible, staying close to a wide variety of sources from political pamphleteering to penny tracts and product advertisement to occasional interviews. The argument begins where the last chapter ended, with the body politics of nationalism. But the remit of the exposition is now wider than the politics of self-expression, and the overall objective a different one: the nationalist concern for physical culture is made to reveal a specific bias in favour of a distinct middle-class body. The next two sections of this chapter venture further out into middle-class writing to gather additional evidence for how the prevailing concern for the body – associated with matters such as hygiene, food and sex – defined a sense of social identity. The overall argument suggests that being middle class assumed the character of a medical condition that strangely replicated the pathological political situation this constituency found itself in. The final two sections seek to interpret what was quite literally the weakness of the middle class under the light of pervasive communal conflict. It will be pointed out that the medical condition that defined middle-class identity had distinct Hindu and Muslim varieties with different sets of symptoms. The middle-class body was not only the source of a distinct but inherently self-destructive identity, it also reproduced the political divisions that rendered a more unified class consciousness impossible.

## Demarcating the middle-class body

The politics of self-expression radicalized and inverted a discourse of 'constructive' nationalism that had developed a strongly corporeal agenda from the late nineteenth century onwards. The world over – from pre-unification Germany to Kuomintang China – the sporting body was identified as a primary site of national regeneration.[2] Following this trend, it became almost universally accepted in North Indian circles that individual strength (*taqat*) was the foundation of the collective power of the nation. The *Qa'id-e A$^{c}$zam* reiterated an ideal that had been dominant during all his lifetime when he addressed the first Pakistan Olympic Games in one of his last ever speeches in April 1948. 'Nations the world over attach so much importance to body-building and physical culture' he exclaimed and urged his compatriots to 'build Pakistan higher, firmer and stronger.'[3] Pakistanis of all walks of life should acquire a physical strength that kept them 'fighting fit, all [their] life and all the time in every walk of life of [their] nation.'[4] But what exactly did such invocations of national strength mean? As the following survey of different interventions on nationalism and physical culture will demonstrate, national strength was strongly over-determined by matters of class.

A document of the All India Muslim Reforms League (based in Agra) identified several fields of action in order to bring the Muslim community/nation in India

closer to their goal of self-determination: education, cultural uplift, physical culture and economic development. While the last aspect remained characteristically undeveloped, the authors had very specific instructions about corporeal matters. Old indigenous sports were to be brought 'within easy reach of [the] *masses*', *akharas* (traditional 'gymnasiums') were to be opened in every neighbourhood in order to encourage healthy exercising; children should exert themselves in 'playing centres and parks'. More emphatically, national regeneration required the 'arranging [of] mass drills and mass parades to instil discipline and [a] healthy spirit of comradeship in Muslim boys'. Special attention was to be given to the 'arranging and organizing [of] Endurance feats in Swimming, Cycling and Walking to make *our* young men hardy and enterprising.'[5]

There was a tacit bifurcation of standards in this policy recommendation. Leaving aside the obvious gender bias, ordinary people ('the masses') were to be served by a consolidation of what they were already accustomed to, that is 'old' forms of exercise, for instance *akhara*-based traditional wrestling. Then there were more specific prescriptions for *middle-class* self-strengthening – focused around non-traditional forms of sports – and with the specific aim of an *internal* transformation of 'our' young men. Unlike wrestling, these activities were not about outdoing an opponent, but about the mental ability to subdue and control the body's inbuilt aversion to exertion. The desired strength did not consist in muscular capacity and sporting technique, but in mental attributes such as hardness and 'enterprise'.

Such ideas of middle-class self-strengthening had been around in India for some time. As Carey Watts and Harald Fischer-Tiné have demonstrated in their work on late nineteenth and early twentieth-century physical culture, Indian constructive nationalists took on prevailing Victorian ideas about 'character building' and made them part of their educational programmes.[6] The Boy Scout movement, for instance, exemplified a British-sponsored approach that especially valorised the ability to overcome one's physical and moral weaknesses.[7] The value of the Scouts for nationalist regeneration was still discussed in the 1930s and 1940s and incorporated into a self-expressionist political language. Shaikh Iftikhar ur-Rasul, a barrister by trade, argued in an article in the Urdu press that a nation/community ('*qaum*') 'wanting to be fit for survival ('*zinda*') for times to come' had to give first priority to the upbringing (*tarbiat*) of their children. His reasoning was typical of self-expressionism. Bad education – a corruption of the nation's inner essence – was a greater danger to the survival of the nation than external threats. But what exactly was good education? It had to foster 'the sustenance and development of three aspects of the national persona: good manners ('*ikhlaq*'), brain ('*dimagh*') and body ('*jism*')'. The trouble with existing education was its overreliance on books and the subsequent neglect of the cardinal virtues of strength ('*taqat*'), health ('*tandarusti*') and bravery ('*shaja$^{c}$at*'). The Boy Scouts, in contrast, satisfied these requirements because as an 'army of children' they offered an excellent combination of social uplift and martial training that could rid national life of all its afflictions. 'The instilling of a martial way of life is the true

spirit of national education' the writer asserted and added with the characteristic disdain of the self-expressionist prophet 'and it is this [martial] spirit that the national body of India ['Hindustan ka kalbud'] is completely lacking.'[8] The emphasis on self-discipline (*adab-e nafs*) indicated that the 'body of India' was really only the middle-class body writ large, while the main source of weakness – bookishness – was also a problem exclusive to the educated minority within the nation. The Boy Scouts maintained their appeal beyond the era of constructive nationalism because they fitted in with the self-expressionist desire to rid middle-class people of their middle class-ness through very middle-class means.

The ideas of strength and weakness as expressed in the article on Boy Scouts or in the Muslim Reforms League programme were distinctly different from more popular conceptions of strength. As in many other parts of the world, lower class self-assertion in North India was tied to a celebration of their most precious possession – physical labour power. The wrestler-hero (*pehlvan*) exemplified this ideal in a local cultural context drawing on Islamicate traditions of spiritual self-fashioning.[9] To a certain extent the middle classes were willing to acknowledge the achievements of such traditional sports. A particularly prominent example was a wrestler with the *nom de guerre* 'Gama Pehlvan', who was world champion between 1910 and 1940. His international career began in 1910, when he participated at a prize tournament in London; after a series of surprisingly easy victories against British athletes, he defeated the incumbent champion Stanislav Zbyszko from Poland. A rematch in 1928, this time in India and again won by Gama, attracted the widest possible attention in the Indian press.[10] Even decades later, Gama was still endlessly praised in Punjab middle-class publications as well as in popular poetry.[11] But prejudices of class never really disappeared from such admirations, as the following interview with the great hero himself demonstrates.

In the mid-1930s, one Pandit Som Dutt, headmaster of a leading Arya Samaj boarding school went to visit the master *pehlvan* who was then living off a stipend at the princely court of Patiala. The account of the encounter was published in the children's section (or rather section *about* children) of the Urdu weekly *Tej*.[12] The Pandit's (and the newspaper's) main objective was to use Gama's appeal to popularize the need for more rigorous physical education from a young age. Following Western ideas about healthy bodies for a healthy nation, Indians of all shades of opinion had come to believe that physical education should start as early as possible. This was the subject of regular newspaper columns[13] and recognized political programmes – for instance, the provision for playgrounds in the Muslim Reforms League proposal. But these ideas conflicted with different and older ideas of child development that stressed the careful nurture of strength through good food and the avoidance of too much exertion.

When prompted about this by Som Dutt, Gama advocated a middle way between traditional and westernized ideas of physical development. As long as exercise remained confined to a couple of sit-ups and push-ups ('*dand*' and '*bethak*') a day, the *pehlvan* argued, it was no harm for pre-teen children; but hard and proper training should only begin after the onset of puberty. As the interview

went on, the headmaster persisted in positing his own German-inspired programme of physical education against conventional wisdom. He asked Gama about what one should do after an exercise routine had been completed; traditional *pehlvans* would sit down to relax and drink milk with almonds in order to refresh and replenish themselves; in contrast, Prof. Ram Murti, a leading German-educated authority, recommended the immediate immersion of the sweating body in cold water. Here Gama essentially stuck to his guns; he could not possible challenge such great authority as a German professor, he exclaimed, but as a *pehlvan* he still believed that drastic measures after exertion were harmful, not beneficial for the body.

For the working-class man Gama, strength came from a combination of exercise and the careful protection and nourishment that would lead to a balanced 'body of one colour'[14]; for the middle-class educationist Prof. Ram Murti it stemmed from the hardening of the body by the deliberate infliction of negative sensations. There was a clash between different medical traditions at play. In *Yunani Tibb* and *Ayurveda* – India's established discourses of humoural medicine – milk is seen as a cooling substance that could get the body back into a balanced state after 'heated' activity. The cold water bath advocated by the headmaster was not designed to balance but to shock; its exact discursive origin is unclear, but probably located in some German homeopathic tradition such as Pater Kneipp's natural cures.[15] The peculiarity of the middle-class body – as it is here contrasted with Gama's – was a combination of being more in line with the absolute truth of science and a strong sense of self-loathing, a desire for negative sensations that demarcated the body as a site of struggle.

Gama's muscular prowess had to be recognized by middle-class commentators not because it suited their own ideas of what national strength should be, but because he had achieved something that was a perfect symbolization of the wider aims of their political programme. Gama had lived up to the undisputed yardstick of national survival and historical success – he defeated the strength of the white colonizers in an internationally recognized context. Middle-class strength had not proved its mettle in the same manner. It is revealing that somebody like Maulana Zafar Ali Khan once deemed it necessary to publish a particularly hyperbolic poem about a Calcuttan Muslim high-school team defeating an Anglo-Indian side in football. Only a deep sense of physical insecurity could amplify such a modest achievement into an event of epic proportions.[16] The much more successful Gama Pehlvan was not only a symbol of hope, he was also a challenge to middle-class complacency. This is why headmaster Som Dutt had to strike a balance between getting Gama to approve new nationalist ideas of physical culture, and keeping the wrestler firmly in his place by demonstrating that the latter was really old fashioned.

A similar combination of admiration and the desire to tame was at play in a later example of middle-class attitudes towards muscle power. An early 1950s edition of the self-expressionist and highbrow weekly *Chatan*, showed Iqbal Butt – 'Mister Punjab' – sitting at the feet and holding hands with

Mahmud Namju – 'Mister Universe'.[17] Both are wearing tight swimming trunks. Namju is flexing the muscles of his left arm in order to demonstrate his strength. But despite its populist appearance, this somewhat camp composition already shows the hegemonic influence of a specifically middle class self-expressionist view. Body building (and its representation here) is all about the *contemplation* of strength, not about the *deployment* of strength in sporting action. As was the case with the political strength of the middle class in general, corporeal sculpting was a *passive* achievement that depended on the *aesthetic* recognition by an outside jury; strength was not acted out, it simply existed as a state of being.

Another line can be drawn between middle-class strength and the archetype of machismo in North Indian culture – the Raja or King who lived on in modern days as the oppressive *zamindar* or bandit (*daku*). 'Feudal' masculine strength was defined by the calculated loss of control and a sense of reckless passion. Zalim Daku (the 'cruel gangster') as described in a popular detective novel of the 1930s is an (almost) charming example: he lusts after every beautiful female that he sees and believes that by abducting her he can conquer her with the strength of his desires; crimes of passion follow as a matter of course. This man is courageous to the point of foolishness, never letting down a challenge to his honour. The gangster hero is also deliberately unpunctual – the fact that this is actually observed by the middle-class author of the 'novel' is illustrative in itself – and sees getting drunk as a natural symbol of his hot-blooded manliness.[18]

A similar but clearly less sympathetic figure was the 'feudal lord' as frequently depicted by Urdu middle-class writers, both of a conservative and 'progressive' bend of mind. The young landlord Khuda Bakhsh and his father 'Malik Saheb' in Ahmad Nadeem Qasimi's short story *Lawrence of Thaleibiya* offer excellent examples for how the middle classes perceived feudal masculinity. 'Malik Saheb' is introduced with a lengthy description of his strong physical presence. Qasimi refers to the 'abundance of his body' as he lies on an oversize *charpoi* to be massaged by several servants. This abundance is not passive obesity but a symbol of an exploitative authoritarianism. A nutrition-rich diet as representation of the peasants' labour – exemplified by the creamy *lassi* and the buttered *parathas* of the Punjab countryside – is the source of 'strength'. Khuda Bakhsh, the young landlord, delights in blood sports such as falconry and loves to draw comparisons between himself and the surgically carnivorous skills of his prized bird of prey. Servants and tenants are subjected to a continuous stream of deliberately sexualized insults. The private parts of the landlord are carelessly bared in their presence, but they must not notice or comment. The beautiful daughter of a tenant farmer is as much legitimate prey for the feudal lord as starlings are for the landlord's falcon. When the middle-class narrator (a well-educated young Lahori) politely asks Khuda Bakhsh about the well-being of a beautiful peasant girl, the latter can only understand this as an expression of sexual interest and is overjoyed by the fact that the overly restrained city dweller has finally shown that he was a man of proper flesh and blood. All this is shot through with an ever-present fear that the narrator – if he dared to speak up – may become a helpless victim of violence himself.[19]

An aversion to exertion for its own sake, an abundant physical presence due to 'rich' foods, an untrammelled sexuality and propensity to violence were precisely the issues that many if not most middle-class commentators on physical culture tried to extirpate. By replacing such corporeal attributes with an emphasis on self-control and body hardening, nationalist commentators could define a corporeal sense of being middle class against social groups both higher and lower in the social hierarchy. Indeed, one could argue that under circumstances where a politics of interest was dominant, a new autonomy over the body was only the site where a distinct sense of middle-class identity could be established.

In line with the general malaise of a middle class under colonial conditions, it is hardly surprising that such a corporeal identity could never be self-confident or at ease with itself. The important point about all efforts to define middle-class corporeality against its 'others' was that they took place as battles *within* the middle-class person. The middle-class body could never simply *be*, it was inherently unstable and emerged only as the corollary of constantly fighting off a whole range of inner demons, initially representing a past to overcome or a feudal elite to be dethroned. But as such threats receded, there was growing concern that middle-class existence itself harboured grave dangers for the middle-class body that had to be kept in check by constant struggle. How this shift from an internal fight against others to a fight against the self can be traced in the wider field of middle-class reading, is the subject of the next two sections. The first deals with the ubiquitous attention paid to matters of food and dirt, the second ventures into the field of sexuality with special reference to the problem of self-gratification.

## Food, dirt and the enemy within

The project of demarcating the middle-class body through medical struggle was a staple of South Asian print culture from the late nineteenth century onwards. A particular genre of sanitary literature made a steady appearance in catalogues of publications throughout the time period under review.[20] The main thrust of these tracts and pamphlets was that well-being ('*tandarusti*') could be achieved through a comprehensive regimen combining nutrition and hygiene ('*sahat*'). A good example – specifically addressed to the Urdu-reading Muslim middle-class housewife – was a pamphlet entitled *Arsi: or the Mirror of Good Housekeeping*. Like many publications of this type, the booklet enjoyed official blessing; the author Maulvi Muhammad Amin was an additional sessions judge, and the publisher, Dar ul-Isha$^{c}$at-e-Punjab, a Lahori firm with strong government connections. The first edition appeared in 1913, but a second edition was brought out – due to demand, the publishers claimed – in 1929.[21]

The overall tone of *Arsi* was religious in order to make the book acceptable to conservative households who only regarded devotional tracts as suitable reading for men and women. One of the best-selling publications in Urdu print history had been a very similar booklet combining the religious with the practical, Ashraf Ali Thanawi's famous *Bihishti Zewar*.[22] The author of *Arsi* used the colonial title

of '*Shams ul-ᶜUlama*' ('the sun of the learned establishment'), although it is not clear whether he had any religious training at all. The first chapters of the book deal with standard religious topics, then gradually moving on to questions of clothes and jewellery, household finances, women's rights, childrearing, relationships with neighbours and servants and finally the upkeep of a healthy lifestyle ('*hifz-e sahat*'). Overall health was seen as the result of a regimen that the author took care to describe as much more comprehensive than a simple diet;[23] a healthy lifestyle included everything from attitudes towards consumption, sanitation, household ventilation, nutrition and cookery, personal cleanliness, physical exercise, sleep management and the regulation of bowel movements. The adoption of colonial novelties was strongly recommended; amongst them were water purification with potassium permanganate, quinine tablets against water-born fevers, aluminium cookware and china tableware for germ-free food, vinegar and carbolic soap for disinfection.

The matter of class is clearly visible in Maulvi Amins's discourse. His recommendations assume a household of moderate means (with perhaps one or two servants), but a need to economize. Certain erstwhile privileges of the rich, such as chinaware, are only recommended 'because they have become cheap recently.'[24] Many features of village or *mohalla* life are still present, for instance the use of wells for water supply or the existence of open sewers. The maintenance of strict gender separation is recognized, but seen as a danger to women's health because it encourages a lack of exercise and of fresh air.[25] The lifestyle of the middle-class housing colony has already influenced some recommendations for ventilation or, indeed, the suggestion that women observing *purdah* should go for a walk in the street late at night, so they can exercise without being seen.[26]

Maulvi Amin's ideas were not only addressed to a housewife that happened to be middle class, they also dealt directly with the demarcation of a middle-class body. Right at the beginning of his exposition, he asserted that contrary to popular proverbs, ill health was *not* a great leveller between rich and poor. Rather it was the well-off who were in much greater danger to fall ill than the poor. Whereas the latter had trouble to find enough food, the former were under the constant threat of 'intemperance' or 'indulgence' ('*bad-parhezi*') which was the ultimate root cause of all bodily ills.[27] The main problem was not a lack of knowledge – although some additional advice would never go amiss – but the inability of people to stick to a regimen (*parhezi ki pabandi*)[28] even after its usefulness has been accepted in theory. This was the same old theme that dominated virtually every rendition of corporeal culture in self-expressionist political discourse. The middle-class body was a war zone of a mind that may have been willing, but a flesh that was weak.

Food and nutrition was one important area where a regime of temperance needed to be applied. The best 'medicine' of all, according to Maulvi Amin, was the advice 'Don't eat unless you are hungry, and always leave the table with a little hunger remaining!'[29] Also exceedingly beneficial was the practice of drinking

a little hot or cold water on an empty stomach in the morning in order to control appetite – the usefulness of which was further assured by the fact that the British did exactly that when having their first cup of tea still in bed.[30] A moderate asceticism was also the guiding principle of a good diet. Nutritious and healthy food should first and foremost be light, Maulvi Amin recommended, and he identified as particularly harmful the practice of cooking standard meat dishes or *pilao* with clarified butter (*ghee*). Equally detrimental to health were all dishes prepared with thickened milk or cream – for instance, *rabri* and a range of other common sweet dishes. Milk itself was recommended, but one was well advised to be careful with spice and chillies. More important than meat and butter were vegetables and particularly fruit, although special care had to be taken to select seasonal varieties that were suitable for different corporeal conditions.[31] This and other recommendations were guided by the ideal of creating a humoral balance in the body as proposed by both *Yunani Tibb* and *Ayurveda*.

It goes without saying that such recommendations could only make sense for a social constituency that was at least moderately well-off. As the Maulvi himself pointed out, the poor had no need for health regimes.[32] The specific danger for the middle classes was that they may emulate the lifestyle of conspicuous consumption cherished by 'big people' with cultural links to the past – *zamindar*s, for instance, or *pehlvans*, both of whom were known for their humongous appetites, particularly for meat (in the case of the former) and dairy products.[33] The foods to be avoided – ghee, sweets and a large amount of spice, for instance – were what traditionally separated everyday cooking from festive fare. Maulvi Amin's suggestions aim at the construction of a particularly middle-class way of cooking that even in times of relative prosperity broke lose from a dietary culture defined by courtly or 'feudal' cultures.

Similar advocacies of nutritional restraint continued to appear in the Urdu press several decades after *Arsi* was originally published. Om Prakash Agarwal, a medical commentator writing for *Weekly Tej*, for instance, devoted an article to 'The use of fruit and the maintenance of health'.[34] The main conclusion was the same as Maulvi Amin's, but Agarwal's exposition is particularly interesting because it illuminated several interrelated aspects of middle-class corporeality from the angle of nutrition. Keeping with the fashion of the time period, the article started off with an excursion into biology and history, and then laid out the benefits of fruit eating with the help of a medley of medical discourses such as modern nutritional science and *Ayurveda*. Every species had specific foods that were suitable for it, Agarwal argued, and it was a sign of their folly that humans attempted to eat next to everything. The existence of hands on the human body proved that humans had evolved as fruit pickers and therefore fruit eaters. This was also borne out by evidence from the ancient Indian epics: Rama was able to defeat the demon king Ravana after years of living on fruit in the jungle, thus proving that a fruit diet was not detrimental to strength. The strengthening (*taqat bakhsh*) property of fruit stemmed from the fact that they contained nutrients and minerals, such as fats [sic], sugars and phosphorus. But the main reason for why

fruit were so good for you was their cleansing and balancing capacities. Fruit contain 70 per cent water, Agarwal argued, and thus provide vital fluid to keep blood clean and at the right consistency. This would prevent skin diseases and keep children beautiful. The regular consumption of fruit also prevented one of the most typical diseases of middle-class life, indigestion and constipation (*qabz*). The wrong choice of foods and a generally lazy lifestyle lead to half-digested matter remaining in the body for several weeks, thereby poisoning the blood, pushing up body heat and leading to headaches and drowsiness. A fruit diet would lead to the expulsion of such contaminants from the intestines. Sour fruits such as lemons, in particular, were an excellent remedy against obesity, a condition in which the blood had become especially impure.

Om Prakash Agarwal was delineating the field in which middle-class corporeality was discussed in the final decade of the colonial period. In contrast to the more moderate and often pro-innovation stance of *Arsi*, ill health was now no longer seen as a danger arising from an unreformed 'feudal' culture, but from middle-class modernity itself. A healthy state did not simply depend on frugality, but on the return to a remote biological and mythological past. This state was, of course, too alienated to be truly attainable. Nobody could actually be expected to live on fruit as nature intended, so the best one could do, was to make fruit a more prominent part of a diet otherwise marred by the impact of the unhealthy conditions of modern affluence. The concomitant of modern life was chronic and unspecific ill health exemplified by headaches, a feeling of drowsiness, lack of vigour and obesity. Modern life was a contaminant that had invaded the body through food and was slowly poisoning it. Unless this contaminant was expelled through drastic purgative measures that marked a return to a pre-civilizational state, the middle-class body was doomed.

A similar, but more familiarly Western form of medicalized culture-pessimism was expressed by the Yunani practitioner Hakim Achabhu Lal Khatri, a regular contributor to health columns in *Weekly Tej*. For him tooth decay was a major new disease that could be directly linked to new middle-class lifestyles. Particularly city-dwelling gentleman had terrible teeth, he asserted, because they consumed unnatural novelty foods such as cake, biscuits, 'double roti' (toast) and chocolate. The peasantry did not have any such problems because they had to survive on fruit, vegetables and coarse bread.[35]

By the 1930s and 1940s there was a widespread perception that the middle-class diet had become a major source of ill health, while the once derided foods of the feudal past began to appear in a much more positive light. A Hindu-dominated, but cross-communal body with the self-explanatory title 'All-India Conference for the Prevention of Adulteration of Milk, Ghee and Butter' sought to enlist Muslim League support for their mission to 'build up National Health'. A circular explained: 'Pure ghee and pure milk are rare articles of food in all big cities and this tells in the long run on the general health of the country.' A nationwide conference against the introduction of vegetable ghee (*banaspati*) was 'a sore necessity at a time when the vitality of the nation is going down rapidly.'

'The strength and vitality, though very small that we find today in ourselves', the submission continued, 'is only due to the use of pure Ghee, Milk and Butter that our elders had the privilege to use'. If no countermeasures were taken 'the health of the youth and children of today shall continue to approach ruin'.[36]

The question of adulterated milk in cities was a relatively old one and had attracted the attention of the colonial authorities for some time; the main issue was that greater middle-class prosperity led to an increase in the demand for milk which local producers exploited by diluting their milk with water of questionable origin. This was primarily a problem of public hygiene.[37] The main target in the campaign under review was something more novel: the introduction of vegetable ghee or *banaspati* to Indian middle-class households. This Indian equivalent of margarine had made its appearance in the late 1930s and was vigorously promoted in film and newsprint.[38]

The campaign against factory-made cooking fat was an inversion of the old reformist advice to keep the middle-class diet 'light'. Instead of preaching moderation, the campaigners for *desi* (or proper) ghee eulogized the traditional strength of the 'heavy' foods of yesteryears. As was the case with the more austere recommendation of a fruit diet, middle-class corporeality had progressed from a positive vision of self-fashioning through restraint to a more culture-pessimist position. As a result of modern life, city dwellers had to eat a substance that lacked the kind of sustenance that only a product with identifiable bovine origins and a clear cultural meaning could provide. The problem was not that the middle-class body had become malnourished in a conventional sense – *banaspati* provides as many calories as ghee – but that the ingestion of an industrial simulacrum produced corporeal inauthenticity. Particularly in the Punjab, ghee was a culturally significant component of everyday diet that connected the consuming body with the representational spaces of agriculture; with the ancestral village or with the courtyard of the traditional townhouse where milch cattle was often kept; there was the religious bond with Mother Cow; or more profanely, with the supremely patient but powerful water buffalo that let children learn how to swim in rivers and wells by holding on to its tail. The fact that all this could become the object of a nostalgic desire points to a lager feeling of alienation in the middle-class mind that echoed the hatred felt towards middle-class living spaces described in the next chapter.

The connection between inauthenticity and corporeal weakness was the work of self-expressionism. If true strength arose from the unfolding of the inherent essence of national being, then inauthenticity and weakness constituted a mutually reinforcing vicious circle. This explains why the campaign for *desi* ghee was strongly supported by Indian nationalists. Perhaps, unsurprisingly, M.K Gandhi was interested in it. The aim of constructing an authentic Indian body free from modern invasions was a dominant part of his life project.[39] But non-Gandhian Congress leaders from the Punjab also got involved in the anti-*banaspati* campaign, and the reaching out to the Muslim League at a time of great hostility points to some cross-communal consensus on issues of food authenticity and corporeal strength.[40]

The discourse about middle-class nutrition was intricately linked to another field of middle-class body fashioning – hygiene. The question of the right diet was often about how to keep certain types of contaminants – the heavy foods of modern life, inauthentic vegetable ghee – out of the body, or how to cleanse the body of the ill-effects arising from contamination. The preoccupation with indigestion, constipation and the purity of blood can be further connected to culture-specific ideas about purity and pollution and self-control that have been widely discussed in anthropological accounts of Hindu body fashioning.[41] Particularly relevant for the Urdu middle-class milieu was the Arya Samaj take on the matter. Swami Dayananda Saraswati reasoned in *Satyarth Prakash* as follows:

> A Brahman and a Brahmani are fed on the very best of foods, hence their bodies are formed out of the reproductive elements that are free from impurities and other deleterious elements which is not true of the bodies of the extremely degraded men and women that are simply laden with dirt and other foul matter.[42]

As Anshu Malhotra has pointed out, this pronouncement indicated a subtle interweaving of caste and class. By making high caste status (the Brahmin) so dependent on the purity of diet, Dayananda opened it up to the aspiring middle-class circles who could afford to eat pure foods in their daily lives.[43]

The demarcation of high status through the maintenance of food hygiene was not confined to the Hindu middleclass milieu. In *Arsi*, the Muslim housewife was repeatedly told that sealing food from outside contaminants was good and enlightened practice; this involved the careful use of lids and fly netting on all pots and jars, and the storage of food in airtight containers. Maulvi Amin also called for the phasing out of clay and other vessels with porous and difficult to clean surfaces.[44] This meant that the adoption of hygienic practices emptied the kitchen of products with a direct link to the traditional political economy – the potter (*kumhar*) had been an integral part of the village and *mohalla* caste-economy until the late nineteenth century – and reconstituted it as a middle-class kitchen dominated by china and aluminium. The use of smooth-surfaced materials was also of critical importance to the Hindu middle-class household because it by-passed the complicated and expensive customary regulations on how to clean eating or drinking vessels after they had been used by members of a lower caste. This opened up greater possibilities for the construction of a caste-transcending middle class in everyday interaction.[45]

Dayananda's association of the lower social orders with bad hygiene and filth was hardly unique. Inayatullah Khan Mashriqi had the following to say about a social category that he viewed with special disdain:

> A Mulla or Maulvi, barely subsisting upon crumbs and stored-up soups in filthy gourds, living precariously in ante-rooms of the mosque, deceiving himself into cleaning his teeth by the age-old germ infested toothbrush, openly flouting all the established laws of health and decency and yet considering himself 'pure'.[46]

Mashriqi related the middle-class assumption of cultural power directly to good domesticity. The religious 'purity' of the Mullah that legitimized him to pronounce on matters of correct Islamic observance was fake as compared to the real corporeal purity of middle-class Muslim reformers such as the Khaksar founder himself. In order to be pure one did not only need a proper toothbrush – as opposed to freshly-cut twig sanctioned by a Prophet's saying – one also had to live in a proper household – not in the ante-room of a mosque – where proper cooking ware and proper dietary regulations were observed. It was in this spirit that – following Pakistan's first (limited) military takeover in 1953 – soldiers were ordered to establish their credentials as the saviours of the nation by enforcing the use of fly nettings in the milk shops and food stalls of inner city Lahore.[47]

Another important issue was hygiene in the narrow sense of personal cleanliness. The application of enough soap was the entry ticket to a safer, healthier and more middle-class state of being. Maulvi Amin gave lengthy instructions on the matter:

> When washing, make sure to give your body a good massage [or rub-down – '*malish*']; before and after a good application of soap. Then a lot of filth ['*mail*'] will come off; after rinsing this off, use soap again. (…) A lot of skin diseases are caused by dirt on the body; (…) people who practice a dirty life-style have skin ulcers, pimples and itchy rashes.[48]

For the *Maulvi*, cleanliness was a religious obligation. The terms he employed are *ghusl* and *taharat*, Arabic words that denote ablutions before prayer and the state of ritual purity. What is then described in almost intrusive detail is a vigorous and almost cathartic act – lathering yourself and rubbing down several times, in order to see 'a lot of filth' come off. The maintenance of middle-class corporeality required constant effort; the security of identity was always under threat from outside contaminants trying to invade the body through all its 'tiny pores'.[49] The political and cultural meaning of a good application of soap is neatly encapsulated in how the reformist curmudgeon Ghulam Jilani Barq described the corporeal appearance of some Indian Muslims almost 20 years after Amin: 'Generally there is a crust of dirt on their foul-smelling bodies which they scratch like monkeys every few minutes, thus getting sores and skin disease all over.'[50] For Barq, disgust was a powerful demarcation mark between the despicable culture of yesterday and the enlightenment of the future, which he firmly identified with a successful internalization of corporeal self-discipline. The removal of dirt from a persons' skin was an act of national liberation and an entry ticket to a 'proper' middle-class identity.

The battle against contamination by food and dirt was central to the continuous need to reproduce a middle-class identity. If the middle-class person was to be anything at all, he or she had to have a body that was lean and clean. More importantly, there had to be a keen awareness that such a state was under constant threat and that staying true to the middle-class ideal required the never-ending

maintenance of regimes of vigilance. In the eyes of the apostles of middle-class self-fashioning – who made a living out of writing pamphlets and articles, often with government and commercial sponsorship – the dangers to middle-class existence were endless. Not only was there a danger of being dragged back into a feudal world of rich and fatty foods or into questionable forms of traditional dental care, the ease afforded by new commodities and lifestyles was equally calamitous.

This never-ending anxiety did not only embody the impossibility of a confident and clearly defined class position, it was also a symptom of a much larger social transformation that had a notion of middle class-ness at its very heart: the emergence of a consumer society. Body fashioning, after all, was never only a question of reading tracts and newspaper articles; it was also about very real material transformations in daily life. Aluminium pots and silverware had to replace pottery in the kitchen, soap and toothbrushes had to become ubiquitous in bathrooms, and the choice between two different types of cooking fat became a question of national survival. Endemic anxiety ensured that none of these new material investments was ever stable as a signifier of new social class. The continuing need to protect the middle-class body against self-annihilation meant that the material world of goods had to be constantly replenished by more and more novel commodities.

But this is getting ahead of the argument. A fuller investigation into the nature and political meaning of middle-class consumption has to wait until the last chapter of this book. For now it is necessary to return to the world of pamphleteers and moralist newspaper columnists and to survey another field in which middle-class corporeality was established and defended: sexuality.

## The dangers of sex

The matter of sex appears at this point in the argument quite naturally. As we shall see, there was a strong and direct connection between the need to control sexual stimulation and the dangers of food and dirt outlined in the previous section. It is useful to point this out right at the beginning, because this common problematic defines what we actually wish to discuss in the context of 'sex'; the issue, here, is primarily the production of physical pleasure – through fantasies, intercourse or autoerotic manipulation – not questions related to sexual deviance, reproduction or gender relations. Overindulgence in sexual pleasure was seen as a problem very similar to the 'love of ease', or the digestion of spicy and fatty meals. Attitudes towards pleasure were also implicated in the demarcation of the middle-class body against a feudal or proletarian other, and in the subsequent redirection of the inner struggle against middle class-ness itself.

Lala Lajpat Rai sketched out the contours of the middle-class sex problem in his book *Unhappy India*.[51] His immediate concern was to counter the racist observations of Katherine Mayo, an American travel-writer and resident apologist for the British Empire.[52] Her book caused an uproar when it was published and drew in angry responses by many Indian nationalist writers, including prominent

women.[53] Mayo had absorbed one of the standard stereotypes of the oriental 'other' – hyper-sexuality – and assembled the usual set pieces to back it up; particularly Hindu India was riddled with child marriage and temple prostitution. Somewhat more originally, she also observed that local newspapers were full of adverts of a sexual nature and concluded that sexual over-stimulation was rampant in Indian society; the latter led to corporeal weakness, which in turn justified the colonial presence.

Lajpat Rai attempted to counter these claims by throwing the accusation of hyper-stimulation back at the metropolitan audience. He agreed that 'child marriage (…) is a factor that does no doubt accentuate sex stimulus and causes physical deterioration'[54], but he felt that the achievements of Hindu reformism had largely been able to deal with this problem. Although betrothal took place at a young age, he argued, child marriages were only consummated much later and this effectively removed any negative impact on the nation's sex-life. Taking the beneficial consequences of various reform efforts into account, he concluded that '… even with some objectionable customs, sex life in India is much purer, much healthier and much more moral than it is in the West'. For Lajpat Rai sexual overindulgence was no longer India's particular vice. He noted,

> we do not see anything in Indian customs and conditions that could make the social atmosphere over-charged with sex – as compared with conditions in the West. In fact the boot is on the other leg. Modern industrial and housing conditions, the lust for cheap excitement which these breed, the big cities, and above all the organization of vice on a commercial scale so as to get dividends out of it – all these factors go to accentuate the sex stimulus in the Western countries beyond anything known here.[55]

In other words, the vice of over-sexualization was a product of Western consumer society. Quoting at length from a large variety of European and American doctors, judges and other outraged apostles of morality, Lajpat Rai argued that the 'sex-stimulus' was generated by too much leisure, the availability of cars, newspaper advertisements for 'fornicatory dolls' and prostitutes, the availability of cheap novels, the 'half-brothels' that are 'ball-rooms, dancing saloons, variety theatres' and much besides.[56] Sexual over-indulgence led to weakness and corporeal degeneration because it fostered the spread of venereal diseases such as syphilis. The latter were then exported from Europe to colonies like India. In the final analysis, the entire connection between over-sexualization and racial weakness was to be regarded as the product of colonial rule, as a consequence of the Western contagion.[57]

Lajpat Rai sketched out an ideal of middle-class sexuality that had achieved a sufficient degree of restraint to appear enlightened enough to an international audience, while at the same time safeguarding an indigenous sense of moral superiority over the Western colonizers. Socio-religious reformism had demarcated Hindu middle-class sexuality from undesirable practices of both the feudal elites

and of the urban poor. The notion of the chaste wife (*pativrata*) maintained the purity of the unspecific but 'high' castes of urban Punjab against the polluted women of the lower orders;[58] while innovation such as widow remarriage, female education and the postponement of the consummation of marriage made middle-class sexuality more reasonable than that of a 'feudal' elite. But Lajpat Rai's vision already contained the seeds of its own destruction. The middle-class milieu was not only the champion of restraint, but also the most enthusiastic recipient of the fruits of modernity that Lajpat Rai identified as the ultimate source of degeneration. Many of the vices that he listed as being behind hyper-sexuality in the West also existed in places like Lahore, Delhi or Lucknow; mass housing – first introduced to accommodate government employees and later rolled out to cover other middle-class sections; movie theatres and cafes facilitating a mixing of the sexes – the pride and joy of middle-class Lahorites of all political opinions; newspapers and books with a pornographic content – perhaps not as widespread as Katherine Mayo originally thought, but certainly in evidence; finally too much free time combined with the availability of unsuitable reading material – this was precisely the age when mass publishing began to take off. Particularly by the 1930s and 1940s, middle-class sexuality was caught up in the same contradictions that also riddled discourses about the middle-class diet. Becoming more fully middle class by buying into a middle-class lifestyle began to pose even greater dangers to the middle-class body than the threat from an unwholesome traditional past.

All this was recognized in a range of interventions that focused on the dangers of easy pleasure, which was often implicitly or explicitly sexualized. European social and medical discourses between the late eighteenth and early twentieth centuries had dealt with a very similar problematic when they constructed masturbation as one of the most dangerous vices of modern life. Thomas Laqueur has recently explained that the 'solitary vice' came to be regarded as a medical problem of major proportions because it contradicted the central ideological tenet of capitalist society – that nothing comes free. Suggestions that autoerotic practices led to severe illness were a way of putting a price tag on a form of pleasure that was otherwise limitless and therefore not under the control of market principles.[59] This is potentially a crucial aspect of middle-class self-fashioning and makes it worthwhile to enquire more closely into the instances where the spectre of self-love made an appearance in Urdu culture. A notable point of interest in this context has to be the doctrine of semen-retention – or *brahmacharya* – that Arya Samaji educationists pursued with a zeal that fully resembled that of European anti-masturbation crusaders. The underlying medical logic was quite different to that of the masturbation debate, however, which is why *brahmacharya* will be discussed in more detail at a later and more appropriate point in this chapter. The subject matter of the remainder of this section is a set of other, often less tangible treatments of the problem of self-love in Urdu reformist discourse. Even where the motif itself was not overtly mentioned, the arguments used in the European literature quite often were, and they offer important and relevant insights into the tensions at the heart of middle-class corporeality.

Let us begin with reformist concerns that identify the wider context in which the problem of self-love was placed. There is a curious section in *Arsi* – perched between an exhortation of the value of fresh fruit and advice on latrine etiquette – entitled 'Sleeping and Waking'. It reads as follows:

> Six to eight hours of sleep are sufficient, but they have to be in a regulated fashion. It is no good to sleep during the day and wake during the night just because you feel like it. Sleeping during the day is very harmful. Don't succumb to this habit at any cost, this is the habit of the worthless ['*nikamme*']. Even if you wake up at night for some reason, this is no excuse to sleep during the day. (…) You should get up before morning prayers every day. That way all daily work will turn out right. Only the worthless get up after day rise. To sit around and engage in idle talk late at night is very bad.[60]

At the face of it, this is an exhortation to frugality and hard work. Sleeping hours have to be tightly regimented to prevent the wastage of time during the day. But contrary to other reformist tracts – to be discussed more closely in the last chapter – wastage was not economically costed. Too much sleep and at the wrong hours was condemned not because it was unprofitable, but because it undermined the kind of constant attention that the middle-class person was expected to devote to their inner struggle for health and hygiene. Lazing around in bed led to moral and corporeal degeneration; it made the day's activities wrong and worthless.

The regimentation of time in bed happens to be one of the major concerns of the European literature on the vice of masturbation, particularly when women and unsuitable literature were involved. The middle-class housewife was seen to have too much uncontrolled free time at her hands, a problem that was also directly recognized by the author of *Arsi*. The other danger – the generation of sexual desire through inappropriate reading – was discussed at length in many Islamic tracts for women around the time. An undated example (most probably from the early 1950s) by one Khwaja Muhammad Islam stipulated the following:

> The greatest evil and ill to befall a Muslim household is that its members read novels, stories and film brochures that teach shameless behaviour and which also include pictures of nudity. The reading of these will put dirty thoughts and depraved ideas into the heart and minds of boys and girls. (…) Truly terrible depravities will appear as the result of reading such stories. Whenever immoral conduct and shameless misdeeds rear their head, it is due to such literature.[61]

It was left to the reader to fill the 'shameless misdeeds' invoked here with concrete meaning, and masturbation may or may not have been utmost in the readers' minds. What is striking though, is that unsuitable reading was singled out for special ire. The availability of cheap literature, increasing literacy and free

time spent in solitude was a problem that Islamic moralizers felt compelled to address; and the danger they saw arising from such novelties was clearly sexual in nature. If the stimulation of sexual thoughts was bound to lead to heinous sins, it was also, as the author did not fail to point out, a waste of resources. The reading of pulp fiction was an unnecessary expenditure in both time and money.[62]

The connection between unnecessary pleasure, waste and corporeal depravity (as well as deprivation) was also central to Ghulam Gilani Barq's tirades that did occasionally mention self-love directly. The Islamic establishment, Barq argued was '… a class of people sunk in homo-sexuality, masturbation and other unmentionable methods of sexual satisfaction.'[63] This was, of course, only another on a long list of condemnations that Barq heaped on the *madrasa* educated *ᶜulama*. Barq regarded all exponents of traditional Islam – Sufis included – as undignified beggars who always asked for money, but did nothing to address any of the real problems faced by their community.[64] Proper middle-class conduct was to rely on action, self-help and focus on concrete social and political gains rather than spiritual matters. The fact that our educationist added masturbation to his condemnation of the lazy religious establishment is significant, because it indicates first that Barq was familiar with the European anti-masturbation discourse; second that he accepted that proper middle-class behaviour should be rid of this vice because it led to a lack of striving and ambition. For Barq, modern life was all about hard work and achievement. As he said with usual flourish, 'success in life is a perpendicular rock to climb which one has to strain every nerve and use one's utmost endeavour. Lily-livered shirkers and chicken-hearted cowards can never achieve success.'[65] In Barq's eyes most middle-class young men had already overstrained their nerves and thus become subjects of 'listless indifference'.[66] If this was not yet a direct link to masturbation, it was supplied later on in the same book. The primary vice in modern society was the pursuit of unproductive pleasure, he argued. After outlining in meticulous detail how the Prophet of Islam organized his every waking minute around daily chores and his religious and political duties[67], Barq accused his compatriots for having too much free time which was filled with unwholesome reading: 'You need all sorts of trash … tales of fairies and demons, detective novels and books on sex.'[68] The problem of free time and entertainment returned once again to the problem of sexual arousal.

It is possible to identify some of the books that Barq may have had in his mind when he conjured up the dangers of reading for pleasure. Indian entrepreneurs certainly realised that money was to be made from products that specifically targeted the desire for solitary sex. J.S. Sanat Singh and Sons, a large and perfectly reputable Urdu publisher in pre-Partition Lahore, offered the following title in their standard catalogue that also included children's literature, historical investigations, popular science tracts, practical self-help books and much else: 'For the loneliness of the night – THE ORIGINAL KOKSHASTRA OF EMPERORS – meant to be read in the comfort of being completely alone; the original and greatest with 160 illustrations and 320 pages'.[69] Similar products were also advertised – in various formats – in *Weekly Tej* and appeared on a regular basis in the provincial

*Quarterly Catalogues of Publications*. *Kokshastra* belonged to a genre of traditional medical literature compiled by Ayurvedic practitioners in order to advise their clients on sexual and relationship matters.[70] As the caption unequivocally indicates, the primary purpose had changed, but this did not stop the publishers to add a lengthy blurb that could alleviate moral anxiety on the part of middle-class customers. After retelling the origins of the book in pious royal Kashmiri circles, the content is related to a number of subjects entirely acceptable for champions of middle-class self-fashioning. The book offered detailed explanations for '[the nature of] childhood and youth, marriage and its purpose, the need for sexual intercourse and its mechanism, for the hidden and mysterious impact of the lunar cycle on conception, (…) for particular diseases both of men and women ['mardana' and 'zanana'] (…) for childrearing and motherhood, about ways to maintain youth and beauty …' This was not too different from what a host of other publications with more or less ingenious health warnings – 'only for those already married or about to be married' – offered to middle-class people in need of advice. Soft pornography could be made acceptable by linking it to some kind of reformist or religious purpose.

Paralleling European thought on the matter, the problem of sexual self-control (or lack thereof) was also sometimes medicalized. Much of this was expressed in advertising discourse, often for products of a vaguely Western origin. The monthly *Maulvi*, a religious magazine published from Delhi, carried a large advertisement for a product called 'Sexol Tila' throughout 1938 which was marketed by the company 'Western Medical Stores' in the Jama Masjid area of Old Delhi. The somewhat unwieldy advertisement identified the indication of the drug as follows:

> Sexol Tila is a product for people who have deprived themselves of their youth through unnatural acts by their own hands or through the overindulgence in luxuries, and who complain of listlessness, impotence, weakness, or decrepitude.[71]

An unusually explicit description of masturbation was thus linked to the more general sense of unease that dominated middle-class corporeality in all its aspects, the feeling of weakness, torpor and lack of physical well-being that was also invoked in discourses about nutrition and sleep control, in self-expressionist tracts and in the sporting ideals of constructive nationalists.

The same was the case for the medicalization of improper sexual arousal in women. The matter was an important sub-theme of a more general medical condition known as '*safedpaniwali bimari*' or '*safedkorh*' – identified by a whitish vaginal or urinary discharge. As Gananath Obeyesekere has pointed out, the present-day identification of this condition with leucorrhoea – a bacterial infection due to a lack of personal hygiene – fails to account for the full aetiological range of the original *Ayurvedic* (or *Yunani*) *safedpaniwali bimari*. There was no distinction between cloudy urine and vaginal discharge, and a whole range of

influences were believed to effect the condition, including the intake of intoxicants, sexual arousal and sexual excess, but also the ingestion of 'hot' and fatty foods.[72] Advertisements for the relief of *safedpaniwali bimari* were common in the Urdu press of the period, and they often reflect the unspecific nature of the disease in a bio-medical sense. One example linked the symptoms of a white discharge and abdominal pains to more comprehensive conditions such as premature ageing, the appearance of depression and more generally, physical weakness ('*kamzori*').[73]

Masturbation was only a minor part in a much more general construction of middle-class identity as a medical condition. All discourses of corporal restraint urged the middle-class body to engage in ongoing self-surveillance, and where necessary in internal struggle. The never-ending project of making the middle-class body was underwritten by the threat of disease. Matters of food, hygiene and sex were merged into a single aetiology, often with the help of humoural conceptualizations of the body. A range of pollutant substances and activities caused impurity of the blood or an excess of 'heat' in the body, which in turn produced a generalized state of weakness, listlessness, depression as well as skin disease and obesity. The availability of print entertainment could be seen as a sickening influence in the same way as chocolate, biscuits and *banaspati*.

Thomas Laqueur's reading of masturbation as the primary vice of an emergent capitalist society can only partially be transposed to the world of Urdu print culture. The basic connection between self-love and an inability to withstand the pressures of an achievement-oriented lifestyle was certainly recognized – most clearly perhaps by Ghulam Jilani Barq, a thinker with an unusually intense hatred for his own cultural background and a very strong infatuation with anything Western.[74] Laqueur's key insight that masturbation offered *limitless* pleasure and thereby conflicted with the logic of capitalism is not easily traceable in Indian material. One of the reasons for this – particularly as far as Hindus were concerned – may have been that traditional Ayurvedic ideas about the role of semen in the corporeal economy never assumed that autoerotic pleasure was limitless or free. Semen was linked to digestion; a loss of semen was tantamount to the loss of strength. Masturbation like any other sexual activity would therefore always carry a 'price tag'.

The main difference between metropolitan and Indian discourses appears to be the following: masturbation was so highlighted in nineteenth-century Europe because it represented the *one* aspect of corporeal existence that even an increasingly dense net of disciplinary bio-power could never really bring under control; in India meanwhile, disciplinary discourses were still fighting an uphill struggle on virtually all fronts of corporeal control; they had no need to zero in on the solitary vice as a special problem. There is ample evidence that many Indians never believed in the power of superior scientific knowledge on which bio-power was ultimately based. Maulvi Amin's exposition of a regimen of hygiene in *Arsi* began with a lengthy and very revealing attack on existing ideas about how to deal with the dangers of ill health.[75] It was mistaken, Amin argued, to see the doctor's role

as that of a 'god or messiah'[76] who could fix things after the body has become ill due to the incomprehensible strike of fate. With great indignation – and a mixture of moralizing and scare mongering – the Maulvi then tried to dismiss the popular argument that many people who did not practice comprehensive hygiene were still well and healthy; so, hygiene must be useless. A mistake remains a mistake, he argued, even if we got away with it a hundred times.[77] Then he compared the danger of death due to illness to a lion occasionally visiting a country road. Would it not be safer to travel on another road?, the *Mauvi* asked, even if the traveller could well be lucky enough that the lion would be absent at the time of his passage.[78]

Maulvi Amin's exasperation with prevailing opinion highlights an important fact about the limits of the disciplinary power of medicine in middle-class India at the time. This was an environment in which medical wisdom had not done particularly well. The period between 1890 and 1920 – exactly when *Arsi* was first published – was one of the most disease and famine ridden in history. According to one estimate, 42 million Indians died as a result of successive epidemics of plague, malaria and influenza.[79] Epidemic diseases continued to make an appearance in many localities throughout the1930s and 1940s. For the colonial administration, such matters became chilling normalcy, as the following statement from a routine report demonstrates: 'Plague is now subsiding in Meerut, and public health throughout the Province [UP] is extremely good, save for a little cholera in Fyzabad division.'[80] Because death was ever present, people could not be easily convinced of the power of regimes of corporeal discipline. What Foucault called 'bio-power' – the control of people by regulating their bodies – cannot be effectively applied if everybody thinks that the prevention of death is entirely out of their control. Maulvi Amin said so much himself when he quoted the popular proverb that medicine was for the well-off, whereas the poor had little need of doctors.[81] The power of doctors does not increase with the threat of death, but with the possibility of life. The great rhetorical effort to prove that death was not simply a matter of fate in such a mainstream pamphlet suggests that the subjection of the Urdu middle-class milieu – let alone other sections of society – to regimes of bio-power was still very much a project, not a reality. This may explain, why many, if not most, expositions of corporeal discipline in middle-class North India of the time period were somewhat frenzied in nature. Barq and Mashriqi's hyperbole was by no means unique. With their constant invocation of racial decay and total ruin they were miles away from the proverbially clinical discourses about medical, penal or psychiatric matters described by Foucault in the European context.

## The body communalized

The construction of a middle-class identity as a medical condition was shared by the Urdu middle-class milieu across religious boundaries. However, certain 'communal' differences existed over how this common culture was translated into some form of corporeal class-consciousness. Both the Muslim and Hindu

segment of the milieu agreed that their bodies were afflicted by chronic weakness, but they placed different emphasis on what aspect of this weakness was politically relevant. For Muslims the lack of mental strength and endurance were paramount, while Hindus often flirted with a more immediately physical ideal of sexual prowess. These differences have to be understood as the imprint of the politics of interest that brought the Muslim and Hindu segments of the Urdu middle-class milieu into conflict with each other. If the body was the primary site where a politics of class could emerge, it was also the site where the possibility of collective action was effectively undermined and subverted.

The colonial political economy facilitated the development of intra-class conflict along the lines of communal or interest group politics. The middle-class milieu had no autonomous existence, but remained fragmented along the same fault-lines that dominated the politics of interest more generally. Access to jobs was of paramount importance. Since most banks, insurance companies and large-scale businesses were monopolised by Hindu commercial men and their clients, middle-class Muslims had little hope to gain a foothold there. In 1935 there was only a single Muslim-run insurance and savings bank in North India, while even those Hindu businesses that were controlled by allegedly non-communal Congress leaders did not employ much Muslim staff.[82] In consequence, Muslims concentrated either on state-sponsored enterprises such as building contracts or printing presses[83], or directly on careers in the state sector and the professions. This brought them again into conflict with Hindus of a similar social background, however. Middle-class Muslims, unlike middle-class Hindus did not do very well in government recruitment based on open examinations.[84] In 1932, only Punjab (and to a lesser extent UP) secured a number of Muslims in the prestigious Indian Civil Service cadre that was roughly commensurate with population strength.[85] But this was largely the consequence of the political power of the Unionist premier Sir Fazl-e-Hussain, one of the few Indian colonial politicians who could really twist the arm of the British.[86] 'Serious short-recruitment' of Muslims and scheduled castes remained a frequent problem in both provincial and all-India bureaucracies until the very end of the colonial period.[87]

The competition for middle-class jobs was made all the more intense by the fact that it was often overshadowed by the sharp antagonism between *sahukar* and *zamindar* – land and capital – that the political economy of the Raj had taken great care to accentuate and stabilize. The respective middle-class sections inherited a stake in the dominant politics of interest from their past and maintained it through family connections and subsidiary sources of income. A large proportion of the Hindu urban middle class were the descendents of village traders and moneylenders who had conducted their often dangerous business in the far-flung villages of the Muslim-dominated countryside of the North West Frontier or West and Central Punjab. Middle-class Muslims, in contrast, were often the descendents of medium-size landowners, rich farmers and urban artisans who harboured a long-standing hatred against the agricultural financier with his secretive book-keeping practices and never-ending demands for interest payments.

The conflict over access to jobs and other resources was often immediately implicated in body politics. A very telling example for the Muslim case was the opinion of one M.A. Ghani, a bureaucrat in the Defence Secretariat, New Delhi, who wrote the following to Jinnah[88]: 'We are now convinced that Hindu by nature is a very uncompromising, base and most crooked person on earth [sic]'; they had it in their nature to 'cut the throats of Muslims'. A large proportion of Muslim war volunteers did not pass medical examination, Ghani reported, because Hindu doctors deliberately failed Muslim candidates in order to undermine the fighting capability of the Muslim nation. Three Hindu medical officers had 'clearly arranged things'. The conspiracy was hard to detect, however; 'outwardly it is shown that [they] are not on good terms but in reality they are one.' As in the previous example, Muslim underperformance was seen as the result of Hindu subterfuge. The diagnosis of TB in Muslim candidates is explained as follows: 'Now psychologically, if we speak to somebody that his physique is so bad that he may develop TB the immediate effect is that the heart which becomes weak and the constant worry makes the man unhealthy.' This line of argument is a perfect encapsulation both of Muslim middle-class corporeality and Muslim middle-class perceptions of their own position in politics. The Muslim body may or may not be strong, but this accounted for nothing against an enemy who was able to deploy superior mind power. Not really being able to make an argument based on universal standards of truth – such as a medical certificate – led to a feeling of helplessness and then to a flight into conspiracy theory. It comes as no surprise that the letter ends with the dark rumination that the complaint may not even reach the *Qa'id-e Aᶜzam* because of the machinations of a Hindu censor.

National survival demanded a kind of corporeal strength that could match Hindu 'cunning' without giving up the ability to differentiate the Muslim middle-class body from the more muscular force of the lower orders or the crude machismo of the feudal elite. This quest for mental strength was sometimes hidden behind a more conventional rhetoric playing on juxtapositions of male and female, Inayatullah Khan Mashriqi, for instance, liked to proclaim that the Khaksars were 'a movement for men, lions, soldiers and belligerents, and never for women, wives, eunuchs and boys.'[89] Seen in the context of Khaksar practical politics, this could only mean that those who willingly subjected themselves to hardship and pain were 'real' men, while those unwilling to bid farewell to the ease of middle-class existence were either akin to females or not properly grown-up. According to Mashriqi, the stranglehold of motherly love was one of the most debilitating aspects of Muslim culture; real masculinity could only exist far removed from the household, in the encampment of warriors. But despite the much-trumpeted invocation of a conventional sexual motif, this type of male strength was very different from more conventional ideas of machismo. The main emphasis in the Khaksar ethos was on endurance and mastery of the body's love of ease, not on muscular power or masculine prowess.

A closer reading of Mashriqi's hyperbolic of masculinity casts considerable doubt on the extent to which Khaksar corporeality represented any specific sense

of 'manliness' at all. Strength conceived as hardness and control was a passive rather than an active attribute. At first glance this may seem to contradict the Khaksar obsession with 'action'. According to their founder (echoing the Italian fascist Giovanni Gentile),

> If once the individuals of a nation are infused with courage, power, energy, aspiration, will, and if action is instilled in their limbs – action in hands, feet, body, soul and determination – in short action, then nothing on earth can stop that nation from its onward march.[90]

This quote – and there are many similar ones in Mashriqi's oeuvre – points to more than an emphasis on action. It constitutes a *fetishization* of action, in the sense that the act of doing something vigorously became a magic thing in itself that completely eclipsed what was actually done. It appears that the contradiction between this and the more passive emphasis on hardness was not really a contradiction at all. Precisely because an allegedly hyper-masculine ideal of strength had been made entirely passive – exemplified by the individual activist who submits himself completely to a leader – did 'action' in itself become the object of desire. The fetish 'action' was substituted for true *agency*. The Khaksar was perennially getting ready for apocalyptic battle by extending the limits of his endurance, but precisely because the battle was thought to be of such apocalyptic proportions and about such abstract issues as extinction and survival of the nation, it was really about nothing at all, save, of course, about the reaffirmation of battle-hardness itself. Unlike the strength of Gama the wrestler or of Malik Saheb the landlord, Khaksar strength could only be reactive. In most concrete circumstances the Khaksars sought their heroism not in victory – in dealing the blow – but in martyrdom and suffering.

A similar combination of apparently hyper-masculine activism and actual passivity existed in the *Khilafat-e-Pakistan Scheme* (a publication of the Muslim League Right). Here, the ideal of strength was expressed in the discourse of the '*khuda mard*' or 'God-Man' – a Nietzschean concept popularized in India by the philosophical poetry of Sir Muhammad Iqbal (1873–1938). The *khuda mard* was conceived as a masculine embodiment of will power, exemplified by the Ur-male Adam himself. For the authors of the *Scheme* the prime examples of such a supreme being were Napoleon and Hitler. The emphasis on great history-changing leaders already indicates a basic loss of agency. While decisiveness, exuberance, ambition and toughness are eulogised to the point of fetishization, they are not normally located in the self, but in some unattainably superior 'other'. It was not the case that the authors of the Scheme praised the cult of leadership because they wanted to be leaders themselves (something that could be said about Savarkar or Mashriqi). Their exultation of obedience stemmed from an active desire for *submission*. They revelled in the sweet relinquishment of oneself to military discipline and regimentation, and praised dictatorship as the most natural form of political organization. There was an almost desperate appeal to

destiny to give them a godlike figure to submit to. When Jinnah emerged on their horizon shortly after the *Scheme* was published, they glowingly addressed him as 'father' and 'general'.[91]

All this was not what Muhammad Iqbal originally had in mind. For him *every* human being (or at any rate every male) was created with an inborn duty to exercise their autonomous will: 'teri rizaq kiya he? – what is *your* desire?' is, according to one of Iqbal's most famous poems, the first thing that God asked Adam after creating him.[92] This was a *universal* celebration of the will and an invitation to freedom for all. There are echoes of upper-class macho exuberance here, but they have been made accessible to middle-class circles in a philosophical – that is cerebralized – form. Nationalists such as the authors of the *Scheme* found this ideal attractive and liberating, but they also believed that such untrammelled strength was in reality not really for them. It was as if the young authors of the *Scheme* – feeling the pull of the will to freedom – had to flee in the opposite direction of extreme restraint in order to be never challenged by it.

Although the ideal of liberation through hyper-restraint remained masculine in origin and despite the fact that there is little evidence that Muslim nationalists were seeking an overtly gender-inclusive political language, the specific 'mental' masculinity of Muslim self-expressionism could be extended to women activists when circumstances demanded. Mashriqi's likening of weaklings to women was more of a conventional figure of speech than a physical indictment of the female sex. It was entirely proper in the eyes of the movement that a training camp was once commanded and 'inspected' by Saeeda Khatun, the 12-year old daughter of the local Khaksar leader who had been arrested.[93] The Muslim League also encouraged the political mobilization of women, and when necessary by no means only in the safe and religiously accepted form of idealized mother- or sisterhood. Muslim middle-class women experienced the politics of self-expression as a time of personal liberation in which the boundaries of sex were broken down.[94]

The logic of the politics of interest took the Muslim segment of the middle-class milieu into a valorisation of mental strength. Although they had subscribed to a project of middle-class self-fashioning for almost as long as their Hindu competitors, middle-class Muslims had never arrived in a position where they could see their disciplinary efforts really bear fruit. No matter how much they sought to cultivate a stubborn sense of will power against the perceived slackness of their bodies, they remained a social constituency that could only advance with the help of elite patronage, not on their own devices. By the time the politics of self-expression became dominant, the Muslim quest for mental strength had arrived at a dead end. The growing hatred for their own bodies led Muslim activists into tirades of self-emasculation; in the eyes of writers like Mashriqi and Ghulam Jilani Barq, they had become eunuchs and dirty homosexuals. But there was no alternative to a further tightening of the disciplinary screw. Will power was now directed against all that middle class-ness itself stood for. The call for more self-castigation went into frenzied overdrive and advanced from a politics of self-fashioning into the pursuit of *rausch*, from a Protestant work ethic into

Nietzschean flights of self-annihilation. Self-discipline had become a fetish, cherished and venerated as a cure for all ills, but at the same time strangely emptied of concrete meaning.

## Flirting with the enemy

The Hindu segment of the Urdu middle-class milieu, meanwhile, perceived its own weakness as a physical vulnerability against a Muslim *underclass*. Although politically insecure in the local context, Punjabi Hindus could hope that Indian independence would at some point break the landowner's monopoly over political power, repeal anti-commercial legislation like the Land Alienation Act and allow the middle class to transform itself into some more proper form of bourgeoisie. While the British were still around, a working relationship with the Unionist elite could at least maintain the status quo. The last stance of this idea was the ill-fated Congress–Unionist coalition government under Khizr Hayat Khan Tiwana, brought down by Muslim League agitation in 1946. The great danger to Hindu middle-class existence was an all out Muslim grab of power that could no longer be bought off by gentlemen's agreement. Such an event marked a complete overturning of the normal order of things. The Hindu middle class believed that it had earned its commercial and professional pre-eminence through merit and hard work, that is through means commensurate with reason and the spirit of capitalism. An attack on their status could only originate from the forces of unreason, from a mob out of control.

There was a deliberate refusal on behalf of the Hindu middle-class milieu to even acknowledge the existence of a Muslim equivalent. Urban spaces such as Lahore were by definition Hindu spaces; Muslims were seen to be either artisans and labourers or 'feudal' elites.[95] This combination of cynical manipulators and fanatic camp followers was believed to have had an inbuilt desire for gratuitous, religiously motivated violence. The way that Muslim mass meetings were described in Hindu-owned upper-middle-class papers such as the *Tribune* characteristically conjured up images of stereotyped masses continuously shouting 'Allahu Akbar', or somewhat more improbably 'Islam zindabad'.[96] The same perception of Muslims is evident in many personal accounts of the rise of Muslim nationalism in Punjab. One former communist activist did not hesitate to admit that 'scratching the surface, every Hindu is a communalist', but he also maintained that the Pakistan movement was the work of 'fundamentalists' and 'lumpen elements'.[97] Another ex-Lahori with alleged RSS connections asserted with supreme social arrogance that the Hindus were themselves to blame for the tragedy of Muslim separatism because they failed to understand that the Muslim proletariat could have been kept perfectly content with an 'occasional pat on the back'.[98]

Another observer (and a trained historian), who shall remain anonymous, ventured more explicitly into things corporeal when he suggested that Muslim *butchers* were the leading force behind communal violence. His analysis repeats

a much-invoked Hindu stereotype of Muslims in which meat eating and superior physical strength are combined with the horror of killing and ritual pollution from dead flesh and blood. Meat – both in its raw and cooked form – was a central motif in describing the Muslim menace. For K.L. Gauba, an upper-middle-class Hindu convert to Islam, Pakistan was the land of meat eaters. As soon as independence was won in 1947, he alleged, kebab shops appeared miraculously in all parts of Lahore. This observation was rife with symbolic significance and subliminal terror. While the genocidal slaughter of Partition was still going on, the Muslims of Pakistan descended into an endless orgy of grilled meat.[99] Meat eating and the destruction of the Hindu community were one and the same thing. Som Anand, another Hindu Lahori observed that many vegetable sellers went bankrupt after Partition because, unlike the departed Hindu middle classes, the Muslim masses had no need for vegetarian fare.[100] The association of brutality with meat was of course not confined to the depictions of Muslims. It was also a standard way of explaining the superior power of the British.[101] More ironically, some Punjabi Hindus were themselves not averse to claiming some meaty vigour when it fitted the circumstances of the conversation. Bhim Sen Sacchar, one of the most prominent Congress leaders in the province, told his biographer that although he was comfortable with Gandhi's advocacy of strict vegetarianism, he could not recommend the same to his children, lest they fainted 'at the mere sight of blood.'[102]

Fears of Hindu weakness had strong sexual undertones that have been widely recognized in the secondary literature.[103] There was a long tradition – going back at least to the late nineteenth-century Bengali Hindu nationalist Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay – of interpreting Muslim political power as the 'rape' of Hindu India. All over North India, the figure of the Muslim invader became intrinsically linked to the sexual molester.[104] This made the very presence of Muslims in India a challenge to the Hindu male. The latter was seen as incapable of protecting his own womenfolk. This included the insinuation that the act of rape was such an expression of superior sexual prowess that it somehow turned the victim into a willing participant in sexual intercourse. The protection of Hindu women from the Muslim predator did not only entail the formation of paramilitary organizations to keep Muslim male self-assertion in check, but it also necessitated a restraining of the sexual desires of the Hindu females themselves. As Charu Gupta and Anshu Malhotra have shown in their respective studies of Hindu middle-class sexuality in UP and the Punjab, there was an integral link between ideal Hindu womanhood, religious purity and the suppression of a Muslim presence in Hindu women's lives. Of particular symbolic importance was the cessation of contacts with Muslim mendicants and amulet makers who were consulted by women of all religions about fertility problems. The combination of elements of religious 'syncretism' with the ability to produce human offspring represented two of the worst fears of Hindu middle-class existence.[105] It was a threat to their social status because it undermined the religious purity that a new sense of being 'high caste' demanded; and it emphasized the fact that Muslims were somehow

more fertile than Hindus. The allegations that Muslims had a higher birth rate than Hindus due to their unrestrained sexuality has been a staple of Hindu middle-class prejudice ever since the early twentieth century, when Arya Samajists published a flood of pamphlets on the gradual demographic extinction of their community/nation.[106]

Like their Muslim equivalents, Hindu middle-class circles translated a sense of political insecurity into notions of corporeal weakness, while simultaneously fetishizing the perceived strength of their enemies. Since danger was seen to originate primarily from the lower orders of society, physical strength and masculine sexual prowess came to be regarded as the attributes that the Hindu middle classes fatally lacked. This was not just a matter of muscle power and physical endurance, but also an absence of mental wildness – the ability of the middle-class person to stop thinking, to overrule all forms of restraints and to follow nature's violent call. According to Prof. Brij Narain, – a prominent economist at Sanatan Dharam College, Lahore, whose work was read all over North India – history was governed by the laws of biology. 'The moral or spiritual condition of human beings' was 'devoid of any ethical significance', he wrote. The problem was that under the rule of the great philosopher–king Ashoka 'the Hindus failed to develop qualities which give victory in the struggle for life. These are the militant virtues. Nature is warlike. And Nature knows no pity.'[107] The condemnation of a universally accepted cultural icon of Indian history was a deliberate indictment of culture as such; philosophizing and artistic achievement were of no use when faced by brute force. Savarkar had made a very similar point in his *Who is a Hindu?*[108], and the fact that there is little difference between him and the 'socialist' Brij Narain demonstrates just how widespread cultural pessimism had become amongst the Hindu middle classes.

It is important not to miss the backhanded compliment that this social group paid to itself when apparently condemning the very cultural grounds it stood on. If only everybody was as restrained and morally good as the middle classes themselves, the subtext of this discourse went, then somebody like Ashoka could indeed stand out as a hero. The sad fact was that the Muslim masses were seen to fall short of such exalted standards and due to *their* lack of culture lowered the whole game of competition to the rules of the jungle. The Hindu middle-class desire for a bit of violent strength in order to defend themselves was an expression of the characteristically middle-class fusion of self-indulgence and self-loathing. Muslim nationalists expressed the same sentiment in the language of hyper-discipline that similarly combined a sense of futility with an undying belief in middle-class superiority.

The admiration for physical strength in Hindu middle-class eyes was sometimes accompanied by an unspoken sense of distancing. Nothing exemplified this better than numerous endeavours to save the physical health of the nation through bookish recommendations. Into this category fell a number of enthusiastic articles in *Tej* pontificating about '*jismani varzesh'* ('corporeal education') in apparently successful, but faraway countries. Unsurprisingly Germany and Japan, the

powerhouses of the mid-twentieth century, received much attention, as did the perennial icon of the Western-educated, ancient Greece.[109] The authors had either travelled to the industrialized world, or read a lot of books about it, and wished to gain prestige (as well as monetary reward)[110] by selling opinions about the crucial question of national strength. Politically consistent – but otherwise outright bizarre – was an interest in Naturism. The ideological rejection of garments was a perfect answer to the anti-societal quest for authenticity in the politics of self-expression; nothing is more visibly free from the debilitating impact of society as the unclothed body. But the desire to make sensationalist titillation acceptable in a mainstream paper by adding some body-political flourish must have been at least one of the motivations behind such articles and books.[111]

In the final analysis, writing apparently well-informed and modish pamphlets about physical education was a way of intellectualizing the problem; as if *knowing* everything about physical culture could be a replacement for actually engaging in it. This tacit re-assertion of the middle-class resource cultural capital over the middle-class vice physical insecurity did not satisfy the more committed sections of the politics of self-expression, of course. There were still thousands who attended actual physical training sessions with the RSS or some other political outfit; the early Hindu nationalist Lala Lajpat Rai is even alleged to have been a practicing wrestler (albeit in much earlier and pre-self-expressionist times).[112] But there is good reason to believe that practical self-expressionism was surrounded by a much larger cultural atmosphere of typically middle-class armchair self-expressionism.

A similar sense of distancing coloured the desiring middle-class gaze at the strength of others, perhaps nowhere more so than in the pictures reproduced in the illustrated sections of weekly journals like *Tej*. Depictions of physical strength or sporting success were commonplace in these random assemblages. Particularly prominent amongst them were European or American *female* athletes.[113] Other images of women's corporeal strength were also considered print worthy, for instance the striking vision of a row of overweight American housewives working out as part of a national health programme,[114] or the picture of a feisty Western film diva posing in a swimming costume under the caption 'an example of physical education'.[115] At one level, these depictions were expressions of nationalist political correctness. In *Tej* – a newspaper with an explicit agenda of constructive nationalism – the illustrated section was located right next to the women's column; in conjunction with some articles proclaiming female empowerment, these pictures of strong Germans or Americans could be interpreted as role models for a 'living nation'.[116] But there are other ways in which the images could be read. The overrepresentation of female and foreign bodies proposed an ideal of national culture that was deliberately removed from local norms and possibilities. Although some daughters of the land-owning elite in Punjab did in fact participate in school swimming galas,[117] there is no doubt that most middle-class readers must have found the idea of women exercising in near-nakedness outlandish. A glimpse of the exotic and the bizarre was indeed what many of the other

depictions in the illustrated section – photographs from the animal kingdom, ethnographic plates, images of technical magic and drawings of bare-breasted dancing girls by the resident 'artist' B. Verma – were all about. This combination of playful interest and sensationalism sat uneasily with the frenzied invocations of doom that the politicians of self-expression predicted for those who failed to develop the appropriate physical strength. By paying so much attention to the most unattainable form of physical strength – female athleticism – middle-class observers could self-righteously contemplate the physical shortcomings of their own community and rest assured that nothing much could, or indeed should, be actually done about it.

In dealing with alleged Muslim sexual superiority, Hindu middle-class discourses had to satisfy two contradictory needs: on the one hand, there was the subliminal desire to acquire some raw machismo for oneself; on the other hand stood the need to defend the superiority of restraint that was the very basis of middle-class self-esteem. One way out of this dilemma was afforded by the doctrine of *brahmacharya* (semen retention) that had long been part of Hindu yogic discourse, but was invested with new significance and urgency by Hindu nationalism. The idea was that semen was a substance that the body turned into physical strength through a process of digestion; it followed that any loss of semen – whether through intercourse, masturbation or involuntary reflex – meant a loss of power. This established a direct equation between restraint and physical prowess and could fortify male middle-class identity without having to accept threatening ideas that associated strength with a deliberate loss of control. Hindu wrestlers, for instance, maintain a strict regime of celibacy in order to protect their undeniably manly corporeal strength.[118] While the RSS often expected its higher cadres to be practising *brahmacharya*,[119] the Arya Samaj attempted to enforce semen retention in its boarding schools.[120] Less mainstream were the famous experiments of M.K. Gandhi who tested his ability of total sexual abstinence by sleeping naked next to young women.[121] The widespread appeal of *brahmacharya* can only be explained by its perfect fit with the kind of passive and neutered strength that all forms of middle-class nationalism advocated at the time. Ultimate sexual control was about subduing the baser impulses of the body – about holding back, not about taking initiative. Strength through semen retention was in many ways the more sexualized Hindu equivalent of the *inami taqat* so often invoked in Muslim self-expressionist pamphlets. The basic equation was the same: restraint pushed far enough would at some point transform into its opposite, a state of total empowerment.

*Brahmacharya* was not a universally acceptable way of overcoming the perceived lack of Hindu sexual prowess, however. A somewhat superficial problem was that semen retention contradicted the much-invoked need to increase Hindu birth rates in order to ward off demographic extinction.[122] More importantly, for many middle-class men *brahmacharya* was simply not particularly satisfying, either personally or within the context of the politics of self-expression. Subhas Chandra Bose, for instance, rejected the ideal of semen retention after

practising it for some years as a teenager. He wrote later in his prison notebook that he considered 'good boys' who 'somehow or other reduced their burden of sin and (…) followed the track of the most orthodox people' as nothing but 'eunuchs', devoid of 'full-hearted laughter' or 'self-sacrifice', and never destined to become truly 'manly'.[123] As all self-expressionists realized at least at some level, the intensification of restraint could not be entirely relied upon to overcome the hated confines of middle-class life; they were more likely to push their practitioner back into a state of inauthenticity in which true self-expression was impossible.

Not all Punjabi Hindus were even much bothered with either self-restraint or self-expressionism. Some preferred a partial assimilation to elite culture in which a 'feudal' sense of machismo played an important part. An interesting example is Pren Nevile, a retired diplomat and writer who has contributed to a recent culture of nostalgia for a lost West Punjabi Hindu identity. Exuberant sexuality plays a very important role in his writings, and is indeed elevated to one of the things that made Punjabi (or Lahori) culture particularly enjoyable. Unsurprisingly, *brahamcharya* is written off as largely impractical claptrap; Nevile's teachers in an Arya Samaj boarding school are wryly described as having only limited success in enforcing semen retention amongst the boys.[124] Instead, the adolescent male was free to pursue his desires. Nevile talks about intimate encounters with the famous courtesans of Hira Mandi who were also patronized by the highest echelons of the landowning elites. There are also sexual affairs in his own neighbourhood and extended family, even a risqué *ménage a trois* involving an old Lahori businessman, his servant and a young woman 'imported' from the Kangra Hills.[125] All this is intimately linked to a strong pride in the material culture of Lahore – the Paris of the East – that according to local patriotism represented the highest level of sophistication in India. The 1940s, in particular, are described as a period of glitz, western style bars and cafes, limousines on the Mall, cinemas and dandy-ism. A similar culture of urbane machismo is also evident in the reminiscences of K.L. Gauba, son of the pioneering industrialist and minister Lala Harkishan Lal. Gauba was a passionate defender of serial monogamy and rudely dismissive of sexual restraint.[126] It is revealing how he recounted with some gusto that – on the night before his much-publicized conversion to Islam – an attractive female tennis partner was perplexed to see him with full manly vigour on the court. To the great amusement of Gauba she was looking for signs of physical weakness, assuming that he had undergone circumcision (he had in reality obtained a written dispensation from the Al-Azhar university in Cairo).[127]

The deliberately publicized machismo of Nevile's or Gauba's social circle was linked to a refusal to acknowledge the precarious political situation of the Hindu middle classes. Nevile, for instance, is unwilling to talk much about the impending catastrophe of Partition. As far as he is concerned, the 1940s were a time of bliss stolen from him (and his city and community) by a cruel strike of history.[128] He conceded freely in a personal communication that his family regarded nationalist politics as the last resort of those who had not made it in life – those

who had (like themselves) supported the loyalist Unionist ministry.[129] The integration into the provincial elite could only be fragile, however. Unlike Gauba's, Nevile's reminiscences do not indicate much social interaction with the Muslim landowning class. Despite some vague references to cross-communal friendships, Muslims figure only very rarely in his teenage memories; revealingly, the most detailed description is that of a pimp.[130] The assumed 'feudal' machismo of the Hindu rich was a fragile expression of the weakness of their class.

The usually ambivalent flirtation with physical strength was not only a way of embodying one's fear of the Muslim underclass, it also fitted neatly into a discourse about Hindu corporeality that the colonial regime had brought into circulation in order to assuage their own sense of insecurity vis-à-vis the Indian middle-class milieu. This is the familiar story of the 'manly Englishman' and the 'effeminate Bengali' that has been analysed in most detail by Mrinalini Sinha and John Rosselli.[131] Imperial masculinity was modelled on the 'muscular Christianity' of the Victorian era, which combined physical strength with a heightened sense of body mastery. The British propagated their own alleged superiority with the help of endurance feats, tiger hunts and a cult of the charismatic adventurer official.[132] As corresponding 'other', colonial subjects were depicted as inherently weak, particularly from the second half of the nineteenth century onwards. This masculinization of the Empire occurred in response to the growing confidence of a class of local intermediaries in the most advanced province of Bengal. The acquisition of impressive amounts of Western learning by the *Bhadralok* intelligentsia undermined the early nineteenth-century assertion that a rule based on Western rationality was necessary to help Indians overcome their debilitating barbarisms and superstitions. The idea of a controlled but nevertheless strongly physical masculinity maintained some of the old claim to superior culture, while simultaneously telling aspirant Indians that they had in a way become *too* middle class to compete. Now that they could recite Shakespeare and understood Roman Law, they had become wimps. This tied in nicely with the desire of the colonial elites – often from a relatively modest social background back home – to develop aristocratic pretensions.

The specific obsession with the emasculate nature of the Bengali middle-class Hindu male quickly made their way into standard colonial propaganda literature pertaining to India as a whole. There is no doubt that echoes of this discourse were present in the minds of the men who ruled North Western India in the early and mid-twentieth century. Somebody like Malcolm Darling, for instance – a senior administrator of late colonial Punjab who did not much believe in any inherent inferiority of Indians in general – could not help comparing his own masculinity to the weakness of the Hindu Bengali middle-class assistant who did brilliantly in his exams, but could not endure long tours on horseback.[133] Penderel Moon, a British officer actively flirting with Indian nationalism, still maintained that unlike himself the Punjabi Hindu middle class could not bear the impact of the hot August sun.[134] In UP meanwhile, the British often got into contests about whether they were better equipped to stand the August heat than Indian nationalist

politicians. It is within this context that Governor Harry Craig made the following snide comment about the delicate constitution of Govind Balabh Pant: 'I fear the climate does not suit [him]. He has once more developed a recurrent fever, which while it does not keep him in bed or prevent him from doing work, clearly makes him feel off colour.'[135]

It was in military discourse that colonial pseudo-science about the 'effeminate Hindu' survived the longest and in its strongest form. This is relevant because the Punjab was the province of India where the army had the greatest impact on everyday life, and bureaucratic attitudes were deeply influenced by military culture. As late as 1933 George MacMunn would write in *The Martial Races of India* that only 55 out of 350 Million Indians possessed the physical strength for military service. The stated reasons for this degeneration repeated an old colonialist refrain:

> the effect of prolonged years of varying religions on their adherents, of early marriage, of premature brides, and juvenile eroticism, of a thousand years of malaria and hookworm and other ills of neglected sanitation in a hot climate, and the deteriorating effects of aeons of tropical sun.[136]

There are obvious resonances here with the way in which Lala Lajpat Rai outlined the Indian sex problem, or with the ever-present obsession with hygiene found in Urdu self-help literature. But it would be too simplistic to attribute the troubled sense of corporeality in the Urdu middle-class milieu in general, and the obsession with physical strength amongst its Hindu segment in particular, to a mere internalization of colonial representations. In the first instance, there was much in local cultural traditions that operated with similar ideas about the impact of heat, sexual arousal or contamination on the body, and it may well be that local discourses have been a model for colonial thought on the matter, rather than the other way round.[137] Moreover, the direct ascriptions of Indian-educated identity to colonial discourses often ignores that many of the colonial motifs – including the charge of middle-class effeminacy – were hardly unique to the colonial situation. Various traditions of cultural pessimism that Indian writers were well familiar with, argued very similar points. Friedrich Nietzsche, for instance – who is documented to have inspired Subhas Chandra Bose and Muhammad Iqbal, and was certainly known to others through Indian transmitters – famously denounced the educated youth of his day as 'a race of eunuchs'.[138] Bose and Mashriqi make exactly the same accusation in their own writings, and there is no clear reason why this should be attributed to the influence of colonial discourse and not their reading of other sources. The idea that civilisational achievement led to emasculation was certainly an old one – the Romans knew it, and Ibn Khaldun had built an entire 'sociological' theory on it in the fourteenth century.

What matters at the end of the day is not the origin of such ideas, but the motivations behind their appropriation by Indians, and the ways in which such ideas were adopted to suit local needs. The obsession with regimes of self-discipline was a specifically middle class one and should therefore be approached in the

context of middle-class politics. Both Muslims and Hindus felt that their newly acquired sense of being middle class was inherently unstable and under constant threat. In both cases, this recognition of danger was directly related to the working of the colonial political economy: as far as the key province of Punjab was concerned, Hindu middle-class professionals had been fairly successful in establishing themselves in the new service sector and in government employment, but they also knew that they remained hostage to a politics of interest in which they did not possess the upper hand. The continuing prosperity of the Hindu middle-class milieu depended on the fair play of the Unionist grandees, or ultimately on British protection. The Muslim middle-class segment, meanwhile, had been less successful in translating their educational advancement into secure middle-class employment, but this again made them very strongly dependent on a similar set of patrons. A powerful sense of competition, fortified by cultures of hostility, led the two segments into seeing each other as mortal enemies: as the cunning usurpers of the principle of merit on one side, and as the violent destroyers of middle-class norms on the other. The valorization of mental strength and corporeal strength was the logical extension of such worldviews. But there was never a question of responding to a perceived lack in one's corporeality with a full espousal of the opposite. Muslims worshipped mental strength, but they also realized that there was something futile in their quest. Hindus hankered after sexual prowess, but they were also quite aware that their perceived physical *inferiority* actually identified them as especially civilized.

## Conclusion

The Urdu middle-class milieu attained a sense of class consciousness through the experience of their bodies. A great number of writers and moralizers appeared in newspapers, magazines and cheap pamphlets, exhorting both men and women to develop a distinct sense of corporeality. One was to avoid the all-pervasive trappings of the prevailing feudal culture – epitomized by the love for sex, meat, spices and fatty food – as such things were believed to engender a raw physical strength marred by the loss of willpower and self-control. But middle-class commentators were also keen to draw a line between their own sense of corporeality and that of the lower orders of society, even when the latter appeared in the refined and supremely self-controlled form of the traditional wrestler's body. The *pehlvan* was an almost threateningly successful example of a body at ease with itself. It lacked what was to become the defining characteristic of the middle-class body: a continuous sense of inadequacy. The middle-class body could never simply 'be'; it had to be recreated in constant struggle, even if this meant a struggle against the impact of middle class-ness itself. As time went on, the ease and comfort provided by a modern material culture were perceived as even more dangerous to middle-class body fashioning than a relapse into corporeal feudalism.

Middle-class consciousness emerged in the form of a medical condition that linked all the potential dangers to the middle-class body in a paradigm of

humoural medicine. Bad food, dirt and sexual over-indulgence were all believed to lead to an increase in 'heat' in the body that would then lead to a list of typically middleclass complaints: constipation and obesity, skin disease, depression, hysteria and listlessness and finally, a set of specific venereal diseases such as humoural gonorrhoea and *safedpaniwali bimari*. There were two responses to this condition: one was the participation in an emerging consumer culture – to be discussed in Chapter 5 – in which the afflicted middle-class person was exhorted to purchase the very print products, toiletry items, novelty foods and medicines that reproduced a sense of physical inadequacy in the first place; and then there was participation in the politics of self-expression as outlined in Chapter 2 – a regime of sadomasochistic self-castigation that promised to extirpate middle-class weakness by force.

The great importance of the body for the formation of a middle-class identity needs to be seen in the wider context of a de-societalization of political consciousness. The struggle to be middle class remained a solitary struggle against an enemy within, not a concerted attack on the socio-economic structures that made the development of a more secure class constituency impossible. As a class of bodies the middle-class milieu was unable to engage in collective action beyond the nebulous communities of intoxication proposed by the politics of self-expression. The prevalence of a negative sensation in middle-class corporeal culture embodied the defeat of a middle-class politics by the patronage-based politics of interest. The most important manifestation of this failure is the degree to which the corporeal class consciousness of the Urdu middle-class milieu remained communalized. The conflict between Muslims of an artisan or landed background and Hindus with a commercial ancestry coloured the respective perceptions of the middle-class medical condition. For Muslims, the primary problem with the middle-class body was a lack of mental strength, connected to the inability to remove the body from the trappings of a feudal culture; in Hindu eyes, the process of middle-class self-fashioning itself was perceived to have undermined the body's physical and sexual strength. In both cases, an obsession with deficiency signalled the basic fact that neither Hindus nor Muslims could arrive at a secure and self-assured class position within the colonial setting.

# 4

# SPACES OF SELF-EXPRESSION

The politics of self-expression was the politics of the *ausnahmezustand* – an exceptional state of being in which the existential difference between collective friend and foe was brought into the sharpest possible relief, most commonly described by its adherents as a state of war. Many in the middle-class milieu of North India found this state of being attractive because it was located beyond, and in opposition to, the world of the everyday. They despised both the retreat into the (often limited) comforts of private life, as well as participation in the circumscribed distributive politics that had been grudgingly conceded by the colonial regime. They did not want to be 'reasonable' partners in political communication, nor were they satisfied with being good sons and daughters, model employees and diligent students. For the self-confessed warrior-activists, politics was not about material gain, but about expressing a more authentic and purified self. This was an ideological stance that could *not* naturally muster much persuasive power. The everyday politics of redistribution is persuasive because it affects, in a lasting and continuous fashion, the everyday worlds of most people, and therefore what they automatically recognize as empirically 'real'. Most of us are struggling for our daily bread, and normally, we spend more time in the workplace or the home than we do on the battlefield. Our greatest fear is that something uncontrollable might intrude into the lives of ourselves and those we love. The politics of self-expression, in contrast, cannot draw on the normative power of the factual in the same way. When seen from the dispassionate vantage point of everyday life, the urge to stage continuous power contests over symbolic issues – let alone the prevailing glorification of dying and killing – had something deeply unreal about it.

Entry to the politics of self-expression required an act of will power. It was fuelled by a powerful longing, which drew the activists away from the world of the everyday. But the battle for bread, jobs and local power did not stop simply because a few middle-class activists dreamt of living in a starker and more heroic universe of cosmic warfare. The politics of self-expression had to 'outflank' the world of the everyday by creating alternative *spaces* in which the rules of the everyday no longer applied. Space in its many dimensions constituted an epistemological field, which enabled the urban middle-class milieu to construct a sense of 'reality' that was more or less commensurate with the politics of self-expression.

Space is an easily overlooked element in ideology, although (or perhaps because) it plays a crucial and all-pervasive role in how thought itself is constituted. It is always in some form of space that one literally constructs arguments; one has certain spaces in mind when drawing up facts and connections between them, and it is into social spaces that arguments constructed in abstract spaces have to be translated in order to become 'real'. It was only after the politics of self-expression had conquered and secured these crucial realms of thought and life, that it could be regarded as the only self-evident form of politics.

## Three instances of space

Before proceeding further, a few theoretical clarifications are useful.[1] The mechanisms behind ideological representation through space were explored by Henri Lefebvre (whose basic theoretical and political stance overlaps to a certain degree with the present work). He argued that all social space is 'produced' and that the production of space is conditional according to (Marxian) mode of production, political and cultural setting. Three general instances of space production can be distinguished: 'spatial practice', 'representation of space', 'representation*al* space'; or shorter, space 'perceived, conceived and lived'.[2] This three-fold distinction is an echo of Hegelian epistemology. It means, first the empirical, and second the conceptual, exemplified respectively, by actual houses, streets or landscapes, and concepts of space expressed in maps or architectural designs.

Then there is that crucial and very Hegelian third instance, in which the conceptual is incarnated, thus mediated, and made effective in the concrete. This could consist, for instance, of an extraordinary sacral building or a carefully sculpted garden where difficult political or religious concepts about space have become stone. By bringing concepts to life in an immediately accessible way, such spaces ensure the ultimate 'reality' of the former. A somewhat similar connection will be familiar to students of political philosophy from Hegel's assertion that the state has only acquired its highest form of existence when it possesses a particularized incarnation in the person of the monarch. Without this third instance of mediation/incarnation, the two distinct spaces of the empirical and the conceptual cannot effectively interact in a stable constellation of social space.

All this is relevant here, because the world of nations and of global war, which defined the politics of self-expression, was located entirely in conceptual space. To assume an easy transparency or transposable reality between conceptual and empirical space is in Lefebvre's view fallacious.[3] It is not difficult to imagine that enemies of nationalism can exploit this flaw in practical political struggle. They need only point out that nationalism is a 'mere' concept, with little reality or relevance to 'real life'. This was especially easy in the context of interwar South Asia where nationalism proposed the establishment of unusual forms of political subjecthood. 'Pakistan' as a state of 'Muslim Raj' without boundaries or constitutional shape was perhaps the most extreme example. The Unionist Party in Punjab, the ideologues of empire (as well as radical nationalists themselves when

addressing their competitors), all argued against the politics of self-expression by pointing out its practical unreality.[4] The reason why such commonsense arguments did not find their target, is precisely because the politics of self-expression had at its disposal powerful 'representational spaces', where the empirical and the conceptual were indeed fused to such an extent that the resulting constellation was accepted as 'real'. But this is already getting ahead of the argument. The following pages contain a detailed investigation of each theoretical instance of space production – first conceptual, then empirical and finally representational – in the concrete historical and social context of the Urdu middle-class milieu under late colonialism.

## The production of global space

The importance of a particular form of *conceptual* space for the emergence of modern political identities is well documented in the literature. Benedict Anderson, for instance, identified 'abstract space' and 'empty homogenous time' as prerequisites of nationalism, and explained their creation with reference to the newspaper, the map and the novel.[5] Nationalists had to think in terms of one unified global space and one unified historical framework. The politics of self-expression had a similar basis, but went further. It was linked to a particularly anti-societal form of nationalism. It depended on a 'football perspective' of the world where large collective groups, conceptualized in analogy to persons, play out a zero-sum game of militaristic point scoring. This required the imagination of one global battlefield from which anything that could challenge the logic of extreme nationalism had become invisible, most importantly, social relationships within the national community, but also the complex web of relationships that simultaneously links different communities to each other and makes their boundaries blurred and permeable. The world space of radical nationalism was an empty frame from which the fabric of society had been stripped away.

Anderson's argument about newspaper space remains a good starting point for our analysis of conceptual space creation in the Urdu middle-class milieu. To see how this argument works, one need only consider the following combination of places and themes (all in paraphrase), which could be found in the front-page articles of the daily *Inqilab* on 18 March 1944, a more or less random date:

> The opening of a telephone line between Ulster and the Republic of Ireland;
> increase in dearness allowance for Government servants;
> air raid on Stuttgart;
> air raid on Munich;
> air raid on Arakan;
> air raid on Rangun;
> air raid on Sofia;
> air raid on Wewak (in today's Papua New Guinea);

advances by the Red Army in Eastern Europe;
German spy sentenced to death in the U.K.;
Iranian cultural delegation praises Muslim University Aligarh;
New Delhi Central Assembly discusses budget;
subsides for cloth granted;
103 Congress activists detained.

This juxtaposition of news on a single page establishes a certain form of temporal-spatial grid. Because it brings events from all over the world together at one point of time, it creates the impression that space anywhere in the world is one interconnected whole of homogenous quality. Since the only connector of these events is 'empty' calendar time, space is divorced from meaning and becomes purely abstract. Events in India and events in the world are all located on one and the same plane of significance; they begin to demarcate a unified vision of *the* world.

This imagination of space can be further concretized in pictorial representations of abstract space such as maps, which are – by an epistemological leap of faith – believed to represent the world as it 'really is'. There is no question that the middle-class milieu of North India was reasonably well-acquainted with modern space representation. Geography as an academic discipline was introduced to school syllabi from the late nineteenth century onwards. The *Quarterly Catalogues of Publications* for the relevant provinces list an ever-growing number of geography books for educational use.[6] They were of two types, a series of basic geographies of individual districts intended for primary schools, and more extensive geographies of India and the world for secondary and higher education. The idea was to translate immediately perceived space into conceptual space and then to gradually embed it in wider and wider circles of imagination. Once this process of world creation was complete, it could be represented in reverse order, thereby sealing the superior truth of the abstract and conceptual over the concrete and perceived.

An example should make this procedure clear: a typical metric-standard geography textbook by Edmund Marsden and T.A. Smith,[7] used in Urdu-medium schools at the time, begins its deliberations with the physical shape of the solar system; a little later it shifts without much explanation from physical geography and cosmogony to a wider geographical survey of Great Britain that includes economic and social features as well as physical ones; this is in turn followed by a similar survey of India, proceeding province by province, and drawing attention to landscape features as well as important cities for each area covered. Conceptual physical space is the primary reference point here, under which the perceived space of particular places is entirely subsumed. Nothing illustrates this hierarchy better than the very first paragraph of the text-book. In previous times people had believed that the earth was a flat disc, the teenage pupil was told, but modern geography knows better.[8] A science built in conceptual heavens is thus heralded as capable of superseding what most people had for a very long time found most commensurate with empirical observation. On its descent from the heavens the

imagining mind first encounters the centre of imperial power, Great Britain, and only in the very last instance, reconnects with actually observed places in India itself. Importantly, the latter now appear side by side with examples of the same order which have *not* been directly observed, thereby downplaying the everyday context of evaluation that may have given these places special meaning. A student's home town, for instance, appears just as another of the many towns of India, which are all part of a much larger cosmos determined by scientifically observed natural laws.

Geographical space thus created, appears simultaneously as abstract, homogenous and supremely real because it pertains to be based on the inescapable reality of physical space itself. This space is defined by the measurable distance between unchanging topographic points, which tells us absolutely nothing about the actual shape of space socially defined. Means of transportation, commercial ties, political borders, religious interest and so on, can make physically far-away places close and nearby places remote. The creation and dissemination of the empty and homogenous space of the modern map and newspaper thus de-legitimized the real experienced spatial relationships of the everyday and established conceived and abstract physical space as an ultimate and allegedly value-free reference point for the imagination of space in general.

It is immediately obvious that conceptual space is an ideological representation. Under the protective cover of emptiness and homogeneity a whole range of highly selective and eminently value-laden imaginations of space can be normalized and legitimized. This is easily demonstrated in the case of the newspaper used before. The *Inqilab* front page was never a contingent collage of simultaneous events from all four corners of the world; it was in fact based on an implicit, but nevertheless very specific selection of events. Readers were given the impression that there was an insoluble unity of interest between India and the British Empire. Why else should the execution of a German spy in Britain appear side by side with the arrest of Congress activists? The air raids in faraway places pointed to the existence of a worldwide theatre of war which could counterbalance the continuing (and unreported) Japanese threat to India's own borders. In short, this was space defined by imperial interests, which is hardly surprising in the case of a newspaper with a broadly loyalist bias. Newspaper space was not really empty and homogenous, but criss-crossed and structured by a variety of linkages and causal connections.

Imperial interests wanted to place India in the larger context of the Empire in order to imply that the colony could not survive on its own. Their ability to shape conceptual spaces increased when new media under almost total government control such as the cinema newsreel or radio became available. Both technical innovations were introduced to India during the 1930s.[9] Like the newspaper, the new media assembled news from different locations in a single bulletin. But since they depended on the spoken word and the image, even illiterate audiences could fully participate. What is more, they reported events with greater reality effects than ever witnessed before. While the readers of the *Paisa Akhbar*, one of the

most up-to-date Urdu dailies of the early 1920s, were only aided in their imagination by sketches, people could now hear 'real' voices and see motion pictures of 'real' events. Newspaper photography had already set new standards in terms of realism during the 1930s, when important news items such as the devastating Quetta earthquake of 1935 were fully documented in pictures only a few days after the event.[10] At the end of the Second World War, the absorption in the universe of the news media had reached almost 'post-modern' dimensions: a number of people in Punjab refused to believe that hostilities had ceased when German broadcasts went off the air in May 1945. They insisted that only German relay stations had been bombed, and that the war was still going fine for the Reich.[11]

Radio sets were still relatively bulky and expensive before the invention of the transistor, but nevertheless came increasingly within reach of middle-class listeners. In 1940, out of fear that German propaganda may influence Indian opinion, the government had all radio receivers costing less than a 100 rupees collected. The possession of unlicensed receivers was subjected to a fine.[12] But at the same time radio programmes were made available in a number of official and informal ways to poor listeners, who could not afford to maintain a set themselves. Newsreels and news-based propaganda films were frequently shown for free during the War, after the Indian government recognized their value for propaganda purposes.[13] Unlike in the case of the newspaper, the conceptual space of radio and newsreel was less specific in terms of the special interests or requirements of their target audiences. There was no separate Hindu and Muslim radio or newsreel, for instance, and as produced by All India institutions the contents did not reflect geographical variations very much. But certain allowances were nevertheless made to indulge the peculiar interests of the Muslim middle classes. A list of special propaganda programmes for May 1940 includes alongside Churchill's speeches or H.G. Well's 'The New World Order', two programmes on 'India and the Turkish Earthquake' designed to placate pan-Islamic sensibilities (about which more in a moment).[14]

For British colonialism, control over conceptual space – for instance in geography and history text books, the 'new' media or loyalist papers – was one ideological device amongst many. For the Indian middle classes, in contrast, it was much more than that – it became the primary focus of their political identities. As war clouds were gathering in the middle of the 1930s, some Urdu media tried to use conceptual space to outflank the Empire's embrace. A good example is offered by *Weekly Tej*, a 'soft Hindu', up-market illustrated weekly with strong Indian nationalist leanings. What it conveyed was an *international* as opposed to an imperial perspective. This is well documented both in its pictorial supplement, as well as in its news coverage and general content. Although a reasonable amount of interest was dedicated to India, the wider world featured very prominently in the magazine. There were special biographical features and interviews about Hitler, Mussolini, Pilsudski (the Polish dictator), Roosevelt and Henry Ford (the father of the mass-manufactured car).[15] In the six months between March and August 1935 the most commonly photographically depicted Western personalities

were Hitler (6 times), Mussolini (6), Roosevelt (4) and Stalin (3).[16] It is within this context that Great Britain was allocated its due place. Amongst senior British political figures Prime Minister Ramsay MacDonald only appeared thrice, as often as the rightwing chancellor of Austria, Kurt von Schuschnigg; Stanley Baldwin and Lloyd George had their picture printed twice, one time less often than the leader of the Irish Free State, de Valera. Their Majesties the King and Queen, finally, showed up only once.[17] Underlining the implicit denial of Empire, there were hardly any photographic depictions of *colonial* British officials.[18] India remained clearly the centre of conceptual geography, but it was no longer linked to Great Britain by any special ties; India was facing the *world*, of which Great Britain had become a part like any other. The news pages fortified this perspective: with very few exceptions, stories from Great Britain were only reported if they had some direct relevance for India; for instance, when Parliament was debating the Government of India Bill. News from Germany, Italy, the United States or Austria, in contrast, would be included even if they did not have any direct relevance for India at all.

In a way, the Indian middle-class dream of international recognition as a sovereign country was already realized in their conception of space; they insisted on looking at global developments with the same sense of innocence that only independence could provide. It is very likely that nationalist editors and journalists were fully aware of what they were doing, in other words, that this was an instance of conscious resistance to colonialism. But structural factors were also at work. One reason for why Germany, Japan and the United States, in particular, received so much attention was the technology obsession of the Indian middle classes. If one was interested in medicines, electricity, in aircraft, rocket flight or telephones, one would come across news from the countries where innovations were taking place. Again this is well documented by a magazine like *Weekly Tej*. Science, medicine and inventions for daily use all had regular one-or two-page sections dedicated to them, and there were frequent additional technology features. The weekly illustrated section dedicated the great majority of its space to technological themes (nature photographs and depictions of exotic places being the other fields of interest). We encounter machines to measure brain activity, deep-sea diving equipment, airplanes and ships of all sizes and descriptions, futuristic film sets – Metropolis style, the odd three-axle steam lorry from Germany, electric trains in Denmark and cable cars in Switzerland.[19] The engineering faculty of Tokyo University was a particularly favoured subject, being depicted from all sides on more than one occasion.[20] All this was clearly international in character. In the interwar period, Britain was no longer able to dazzle its colonial subjects with the technological superiority it successfully projected in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The more the nascent middle classes had bought into official science fetishism earlier, the more they had moved into a position to turn their back on Britain and seek out new worlds.

Material culture directly supported this re-orientation. By the time period under review, Britain was no longer the country of origin for most consumer

goods imported into India; Germany, Japan and Czechoslovakia had all taken over a sizable share.[21] This was partly due to British firms now producing in India itself. A range of new articles of daily use, particularly those associated with electricity and chemistry, gave special prominence to Germany as an industrial location. This was reflected in the label 'made in Germany' becoming a prime selling point in advertising. Even *biris* and *pan* (Indian indigenous tobacco and betel nut) would be advertised under the headline 'Germany' because they came with German-made labels.[22] Scientific opinion from 'Europe and America' (as well as specifically from 'Germany') became a staple in the marketing of a wide range of products, from lamps to potency drugs and even life insurance.[23] The presence of consumer goods in middle-class households underlined the deliberate international nature of nationalist conceptual space. One could read about Germany and Japan in a paper, but one could also feel and touch it in the form of a real object at hand.

Increasing 'globalization' was directly reflected in the changing world of print advertising and could be amplified through editorial policy. At the beginning of the 1930s the high-brow illustrated weekly *Riyasat*, carried a very substantial number of advertisements for British products, almost always using their brand names in English (even when using Urdu copy). More importantly, references to imperial connections – 'endorsed by the viceregal lodge' and so on – were prominent.[24] The impression created in *Weekly Tej* barely half a decade later was markedly different. Imperial advertisements had all but vanished, while European, American and Indian brands had taken over most of advertising space. There was also a notable Indianization in advertising style, with both brand names and copy in English now being almost invariably in Urdu. The stark stylistic jump between the two magazines was partly due to the fact that *Riyasat* had been somewhat behind of its time, while *Weekly Tej* was in many ways a trailblazer for new and more self-conscious Indian middle-class world. But political design also had a role to play; as a nationalist paper, *Weekly Tej* was clearly more keen and able to enlist advertising clients with no connection to the colonial regime.

## Imaginary colonization

The contested nature of ideological representation through conceptual space did not stop with an international versus an imperial perspective. There are several other battle grounds to be considered. The Urdu media world of late colonial North India was segregated along religious lines. Muslim papers like *Inqilab* or *Zamindar* constructed their imagination of world space with the help of locations that did not feature as prominently in their Hindu equivalents. Perhaps unsurprisingly, events affecting Muslims worldwide were of paramount importance. What is remarkable, though, is that this special valourisation was not conditional on geographical or cultural proximity. Events affecting the Muslim *ummat* inside India were often reported with the same sense of closeness as Muslim affairs in

other countries, as far away as Palestine, Indonesia, Iran, Yemen, Egypt or Turkey.[25] In certain cases, the worldwide spread of Islam itself was what really attracted interest, as when the Muslim daily *Inqilab* – according to its own advertising 'the voice of the Muslim ummat'[26] – reported inconsequential stories about Muslims in Mongolia.[27]

Two geographic regions which attracted particular attention over long periods of time, were (Ottoman) Turkey – between the late 1880s right up to Atatürk's death in 1938 – and from the 'Great Arab Rebellion' of the mid-1930s onwards, Palestine. In both cases we get extensive coverage with large amounts of print space dedicated to the subject. The reasons behind this pre-eminence are clear: in both cases Muslim issues were intimately connected to a confrontation with British Imperial power, which lent events in both areas to widespread exploitation by political activists in India. The Khilafat movement about the protection of the Ottoman Khilafat against Imperial encroachment was one of the defining moments of Indian history of the 1920s. 'Palestine Day' demonstrations were an integral part of Muslim League resurgence during the late 1930s. According to colonial commentators, they were particularly attractive to the young and educated – the student communities of Lahore and Aligarh, prime examples for the middle-class politics of self-expression.[28]

Supplementary mental geographies were produced in Urdu literature. Commercial fiction of 'Hindu' provenance consisted most commonly in modernized versions of upper-caste epics set in the Indian past. At least in the time before the 'progressive' short story of the 1940s, Muslim novels often focused on Islamic areas outside India, such as Ottoman Turkey or Islamic Spain.[29] Furthermore, Arab historical novelists such as Jurji Zaidan were widely sold in Urdu translation. This literary and journalistic geography was in many ways only an amplification and modernization of long-established cultural norms. Most commercial fiction in Urdu, Hindu and Muslim, were based on earlier epic traditions such as the *qissa* or the *dastan*. One important genre in this literature depicts the adventurous travels of princes, heroes and saints, such as Hamza or Iskandar. These accounts were something like Islamicate 'road-movies'.[30] By taking an exemplary hero through various adventurous encounters, they gave their readers a tour of the world as it then existed. This is beautifully represented in an eighteenth-century Indian map to illustrate the *Iskandarnama*, held at a Berlin Museum.[31] The map sketches all areas visited by Iskandar and depicts some of his adventures. It is not completely based on literary space, but rather combines actual ptolemaic geographical knowledge with more literary or religious spaces such as the Land of Gog and Magog, mentioned in the Quran. The obsession with faraway Muslim lands in colonial pulp fiction maintained a well-established sense of geographical embedded-ness, that had been characteristic of elite Indo-Muslim culture for some time. What had changed by the times of the politics of self-expression was the degree to which faraway spaces acquired powerful reality effects, and the extent to which faraway spaces related back to 'home'.

It is important to examine what kind of connections between faraway areas and 'home' were actually implied in middle-class expressions of pan-Islamism. To begin with, the way in which Muslim spaces and their inhabitants were depicted suggests an act of appropriation. It is confusing the issues entirely to attest, as many Hindu observers customarily do, that the Muslims of colonial India saw themselves as outsiders; as more at home in the Middle East or Central Asia than in South Asia itself. Rather many Muslim members of the Urdu middle-class milieu turned Muslims elsewhere in the world into clones of themselves. Real historical difference was never allowed to question deeply held preconceptions about other parts of the Muslim world. A good literary example is M. Aslam's novel *Fatih Qustantiniyya*.[32] The doyen of conservative Muslim middle-class taste offered a historical romance set in Turkey during the time of the Ottoman conquest of Constantinople. But the reality he described was recognizably Indian. The Christianity of the book is not Greek Orthodox, but English Protestant, and the hero hails from a green and mountainous borderland ('sarhad') which is easily identified with popular imaginations of Kashmir or the NWFP.

Another powerful example of appropriation was the Indian Muslim reaction to the death of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk. The event created immense excitement. Prayer meetings were held in all major mosques of the subcontinent, in some cases involving several hundreds of thousands of Muslims. But the Atatürk that Indians mourned and the Atatürk who had emerged during the founding years of the Turkish republic had preciously little in common. The front page of *Inqilab*, a respectable, even high-brow paper, reported the following on 10 November 1938: shortly before his death Atatürk briefly awoke from a coma and conveyed a message to his servant, which the latter was told to pass on to the 'Islamic Nation' (millat Islamiyya). After shouting 'Allahu Akbar' thrice, it is narrated, the Ghazi revealed the 'secret of Islamic life':

> Life is another name for Action. The Muslims will remain alive as long as they follow in the footsteps of the Prophet. Choose a simple life. Base it on hard work and avoid ostentation. Do not waste any time. Organise your life according to the military discipline, which the Caliph Umar Farooq has laid down for the believers. Seek knowledge according to the commands of the Prophet. Use your brains.

Having said this, Atatürk is reported to have sighed 'Allah' and then passed out of consciousness again. This is hardly credible for a leader who died of the effects of life-long alcoholism, and did more than anyone else to break the link between Turkish Islam and the world Muslim community. Some of the startling reality gaps in Indo-Muslim perceptions may be due to the fact that much earlier, Mustafa Kemal had occasionally used mild Islamic imagery to mobilize the nation during the War of Independence. This imagery was certainly amplified when it was reported in the Indian press at the time.[33] But even after making such an allowance, it is remarkable how the Indo-Muslim account literally and shamelessly

colonizes the Turkish historical experience for its own purpose. Atatürk's dying speech is not only risibly unrealistic, it is also little more than a simple restatement of how a conservative middle-class Muslim in North India understood the politics of self-expression. To make the case more clear, Sir Sikandar Hayat Khan, the Unionist Premier of the Punjab, declared in a public speech, that the Muslim Atatürk had been more successful in overcoming the world than Hitler and Mussolini (the most cherished non-Muslim icons of the politics of self-expression), and that the Muslims of Lahore should not believe what the non-Muslim English language papers had to say about their hero's hostility towards religion.[34] Other speakers and newspaper commentators noted maliciously that Hindu shops and offices had not responded to the general *hartal*, which the Muslims of Lahore had called to commemorate their Leader's death, adding to the general feeling that Atatürk belonged to the Muslim community, and to nobody else. There was, of course, again an element of symbolic transfer of power involved: both the enforcement and the defiance of the call for a close-down could produce states of empowerment that were in a way directly linked to the perceived power of their symbolic cause, Atatürk.

On other occasions, this urge to 'Indianize' Islam was expressed in terms of moral superiority. Indian Muslims saw themselves as better Muslims than others, as the following episode reported in the Lucknow weekly *Sadq* (2 May 1947) illustrates: the London branch of the All India Muslim League – by definition a middle if not upper-class circle and as such probably entirely oblivious to the matter at hand – complained bitterly against a musical programme organised by Farooq, Khedive of Egypt. The latter had invited some classical singers to the London Central Mosque, and the Indian delegates objected to the presence of song in a Muslim place of worship. The aim was obviously to demonstrate to the audience back home that it was only Indian Muslims who kept the true flag of Islam flying in the very heart of imperial power.

The erasure of difference allowed middle-class Muslims to claim ownership of the faraway lands of Islamdom and the most glorious periods of Islamic history. But there was another operation at work, that of exoticization. Muslim newspapers were very happy to employ orientalist stereotypes. The daily *Paisa Akhbar*, reporting on the Turkish War of Independence in greatest detail, sometimes illustrated their news coverage with drawings of the proverbial Turk – moustached, dressed in wide *shalvar* trousers and waistcoats, armed with sabres.[35] In a similar vain, *Zamindar* included a number of high-quality photographs of 'Palestinians' in the Palestine Number of 1936.[36] They are the kind of native costume and dress models, assembled in a 'scenic' group, commonly found in colonial typographies of the late nineteenth century. Being Palestinian was oddly reduced to wearing certain forms of dress that were at once recognizably Muslim, but yet excitingly different to the kinds of dress the Urdu middle-class milieu were themselves accustomed to.

So how did such instances of 'othering' relate to the process of appropriation outlined earlier? It could be argued that 'othering' was an epistemological operation that produced the very space that 'Indianization' could then appropriate. Exoticism

implied geographic distance. Depicting Muslims in various colourful costumes simply demonstrated just how far the reach of Islam really was, from Mongolia to Morocco, from Turkish fez to Indian lungi. Islam was no longer simply a cosmic brotherhood in the face of God, but a block of territory that could be measured in square miles and be subjected to geo-strategic considerations. By simultaneously Indianizing Islam, these vast areas of Islamdom were then brought under control of the Indian Muslim middle-class observer. This was nothing else than an act of mental colonization, copying the example set by India's own colonial masters. European imperialism, it should be remembered, employed 'orientalist' depictions in a very similar way. Stereotypical picture post cards of 'what the natives looked like' could be connected (sometimes quite literally) with a world map on which imperial possessions were marked in a particular colour.[37] As in the Muslim middle-class case, the result was a powerful conception of imperial space stretching to the utmost reaches of the globe.

Similar imperialist relationships with faraway places existed in the middle-class Hindu mind. In contrast to their Muslim counterparts, they could not be based on claims of religious solidarity, but were instead posited with the help of history. The most powerful propagators of the 'historical imperialism' in the Hindu Urdu middle-class milieu was the Arya Samaj, who began to publish certain stock arguments at the end of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries that have remained in common usage to the present day. In 1935, *Weekly Tej* was full of articles trying to establish that ancient India was the true cradle of world civilization, and that the ancient cultures appropriated by Westerners were in fact offsprings of original Aryan Hindu culture.[38] An often repeated example is that the Greek epic of the Iliad was in fact a local adaptation of the Ramayana.[39] Religious-minded Arya Samajists would go even further, proving that both the Bible and the Quran, as far as they were truthful, were in fact translations of the ancient Vedas.[40] Lengthy tables were introduced to demonstrate that Arabic and Latin were derivatives of Sanskrit.[41] But it was not only the Western claim to a superior past that was literally expropriated. European colonization in modern times was similarly requisitioned. As reported in the *Arya Musafir* in 1900, Indians had discovered America long before Columbus, all allegedly well-established in Vedic literature.[42] In the 1940s, Diwan Chaman Lal, a none too religious Congressite and self-proclaimed left-winger, expressed the same idea more forcefully in terms of anthropology. American 'Indians', he argued were really of South Asian stock since their dress could be assimilated to the Sari and they wore something resembling a 'bindi' (coloured dot) on their forehead.[43]

At times, Hindu opinion took the step from mental colonization *ex posteriori*, so to speak, to real colonization in the here and now. A series of editorials in *Weekly Tej* commented on the great population density in India and debated the acquisition of colonies in under-populated regions around the world to ensure national survival for India.[44] The originator of the debate was one Prof. Mukherjee who had arrived at his conclusions with the help of the latest in statistical and geographic science. The immediate background to such ideas were most probably

Mussolini's very similar arguments with regards to the Italian acquisition of Ethiopia, all covered in the Indian press. Hitler's *lebensraum* philosophy, again familiar to many Indians, may also have been of influence.

But Hindu middle-class appropriations of global space were not only reactions to Western imperialism and fascism. They also developed in direct opposition to Muslim aspirations. One of the most lethal examples was perhaps the Arya Samaj assertion, very popular to this day amongst Sangh Parivar activists, that the Kaᶜba in Mecca was really a Hindu temple, established long before the advent of Islam.[45] In other words, the Muslim claim over territory abroad was seen as equally tenuous and false as their claim over spaces in India itself; both depended allegedly on wanton acts of destruction that could, at least theoretically, be reversed. Some sections of the Hindu middle classes directly measured their own will to power in terms of their ability to undermine the Muslim project of self-empowerment. In their eyes, it was the colonizing impulse inherent in the middle-class Muslim conception of space itself that made the latter 'communalist'.[46] This immediately ostracized the great majority of Indian Muslims from 'legitimate' Indian nationalism.

The desire to undermine Muslim conceptual space was not restricted to the Hindu right; it also permeated more mainstream nationalist positions that were avowedly 'anti-communal'. Nothing illustrates this better than a travel report about Egypt by the Bengali radical Subhas Chandra Bose.[47] The piece was published in a Delhi magazine in Urdu translation, a location that further amplified the implicit anti-Muslim bias of the original text. The headline – produced in all probability by the paper, not by Bose – was both enigmatic and ominous: 'The Pyramids and the Sphinx: Nahas pours scorn on the communalist Muslims of India'. The subheading referred to a relatively brief passage towards the end of the article in which Bose describes his encounter with the leader of the nationalist Wafd Party; the latter turns out to be a staunch supporter of Gandhi and the Congress and has little love lost for most Muslim politicians in India. But the main charge against middle-class Islam is far more subtle. More than half of the article deals, as announced, with the sphinx and the pyramids. This gives Bose an opportunity to ruminate at length about the message of history, about the patterns of decay and survival of ancient civilizations. In the course of his deliberations the author goes into the debate about the meaning of the sphinx and considers sun worship as probable origin. The magnificent displays in the Egyptian Museum, described a little later, prompt some more typically Hindu middle-class theoretizing, this time about the long-term effects of spiritual and material superiority. The history and present of Islamic Egypt, in contrast, is only mentioned in one short paragraph. The mosques of Cairo were amongst the nicest to be seen anywhere, Bose simply says without giving any more details.

All this was printed at a time when Egypt was at the centre of attention of middle-class Pan-Islamism. The description of Egypt in terms of its ancient pre-Islamic past is nothing else than an implicit denial of Muslim ownership which culminates in an explicit political slap in the face, courtesy of Nahas Pasha. The

still somewhat oblique anti-Muslim charge of the article is amplified by its context. The same magazine carried numerous stories about archaeological artefacts and great ancient civilizations, which all led to the same conclusion: that the true cradle of civilization was India and that other civilizations were either copies of ancient Indian civilization or in some ways inferior to it. This explicitly included attempts to redefine any act of deity worship worldwide as derivatives of Vedic practice.[48] The average Hindu middle-class reader would immediately transpose this argument to Bose's oblique reference about the sphinx and sun worship. The de-Islamization of Egypt could thus be pushed to a de facto Hinduization of Egypt. Just as in the case of geography and Western imperialism, the very construction of conceptual global space in Indian middle-class circles was inseparably tied to their will to power.

## Realms of fear

What all middle-class news media had in common was a relative disregard for the local. M.K. Gandhi was right on target when he scathingly observed,

> What would villagers gain by reading newspapers? They would come to know of the progress of motion pictures, of the progress made in aviation, stories of murders, facts describing the various revolutions that are going on in the world, dirty descriptions of dirty proceedings of law suits, news regarding horse races, the stock exchange and motorcar accidents.[49]

The immediate reason behind this 'worldly' spatial outlook was the format of the early twentieth-century Urdu newspaper itself. Titles like *Daily Tej*, *Zamindar*, *Inqilab*, *Milap*, *Pratap* and so on all modelled themselves after all-India titles in English (*The Tribune*, *The Leader*, *Hindustan Times* etc.) which preceded them chronologically and up to the very end of the time period under review maintained far higher sales figures. The predominant journalistic aspiration was regional and high brow, as the creation of week-end magazines such as *Weekly Tej*, or the *Zamindar* illustrated supplement indicate. The thin spread of literacy across India was largely to blame for the constricted nature of the newspaper market, as was the limited availability of advertising revenue. Even in the case of a major language such as Urdu, the media entrepreneur had to aim at least at regional and better national circulation to make capital investment worthwhile, and to reach a large enough number of relatively well-to-do readers to make the purchase of print space interesting for consumer goods companies.

There were, of course, plenty of stories in the Urdu press that – looked at in isolation – can be described as 'local' in character.[50] Altercations between Muslim butchers and neo-Hindu *chamaars* in a Delhi *mohalla*, or a traffic accident outside Amritsar fall into this category, but only in the sense that their impact would not normally be felt outside the immediate place where they happened. The reporting of stories of limited importance is not the same as local reporting. This

comes out most clearly when newspapers are compared with older forms of local news reporting that were driven out of the publishing market during the 1930s. Up to this time, local poets had often produced long depictions of local events in *verse* – floods, droughts, but also eulogies of politicians, commentary on rigged elections and corruption.[51] This was a type of literature, which was meant to be publicly recited; its reception was collective and its aim was to convey special meaning to a local community involved.

Neither the Lahore, nor the Delhi papers under review provided their readers with a strong sense of belonging to a specific urban community. The spaces they created were top-down, rather than bottom-up. Like the geography text book mentioned earlier, they were observers located in the heavens, in conceptual world space, looking down as through a telescope to more concretely observable locations. But the local detail thus observed had lost its special significance. Like the school boy's home town being mentioned somewhere in the metric-level geography book, small localities described in a regional or national newspaper had become just another example of their kind amongst many: a long list scanned by the readers' eye as they moved down the page – Muzaffarpur, Meerut, Delhi, Amristar, Sheikhupura and so on. These were no longer places in their own right, but rather coordinates of space.

If the significance of small localities reported in the Urdu press was not their proximity to their readers' heart, why were they reported at all? A cursory survey of the actual stories reported in connection with *mufassilite* towns, city neighbourhoods and villages can be reduced to the following topics: communalism (even minute incidents), crime (all capital crime involving members of different religions lean towards the former category), natural calamities (including floods, strikes of lightening and disease), accidents (most commonly involving motor cars and electricity) and finally, any other sensationalist content. Confrontation and fear were clearly the predominant themes. India as it emerged from the small news columns of the Urdu press was a space in which one was under constant threat to be struck by some unforeseeable calamity.

The dazzling expanses of global space were thus linked up with a panorama of many-faced dangers closer to home. Conflict was one of the defining moments of conceptual space on both ends of the imaginary spectrum, and conflict entailed both the sweetness of exercising power, as well as the prospect of death and humiliation. It was no coincidence that paranoid terror was one of the dominant emotions of middle-class experience between the 1930s and the 1950s. The very sense of helplessness in the face of impending doom was perhaps the most powerful auxiliary that the politics of self-expression possessed. Its relevance for the ideological representation of space cannot be overstated. Because fear directly affected the mental balance of real people, it was an essential connector between conceptual space – that virtual realm where the sources of fear were allegedly located – and the world of the everyday. When the world was seen as closing in on the people of India, nobody would have wanted to dismiss grand global schemes as irrelevant.

The connection between imagining the world and experiencing fear is well documented in the media and in political discourse. The anticipation of an impending world war was already tangible in the middle of the 1930s. *Weekly Tej* thematized it in caricatures, articles and omnipresent statistics about the relative strength of the great powers' military forces.[52] Even before war actually broke out, a number of people in Punjab and UP in all earnestness expected to see Japanese, Russian or German war planes appear to bomb their houses.[53] In May 1941, when India was still unaffected by the hostilities, some Muslim academic from Aligarh published an article in the political weekly *The Radiance*, a paper with close connections to the Khaksar movement. The piece argued that in case of war 'no corner in the world can be regarded safe', because war was going to be a total war. As a result, 'nobody is anybody's friend and everybody is everybody else's enemy'. Paranoia had become generalized. India could be attacked any time, and being a country populated by 'dumb millions' and full of philosophers, moralists and orators but no men of action, it would be easily defeated.[54] In October 1942, a member of the Punjab Muslim League machinery saw the universe in the following terms: 'The world today is passing through the greatest crisis known to history. The problem of the Muslim Nation in India has also assumed world-wide importance.'[55]

After the end of the Second World War, Hindus increasingly voiced fears of collective extermination in the course of a Muslim reconquista of the *entire subcontinent*. If a separate homeland in the North West of India was acceded, it was argued in Congress circles at the time, then Muslims would possess the necessary territorial base to launch a series of invasions on the rest of India following Mahmud of Ghazna's example.[56] An Arya Samaj pamphlet in Urdu from Gulbarga in Hyderabad State made a similar point with the help of self-conscious 'geo-strategic' thinking. Muslim political power had always been associated with 'marauders and rapist invaders' coming in from the North West, it is argued.[57] The British understood this well and therefore did not feel secure about their possession of the subcontinent until they had gained total control over the Punjab and the North West Frontier region. Handing these specific areas back to Muslim control, as the Pakistan scheme proposed, was to set into motion an *automatic* chain reaction which would inevitably culminate in the re-establishment of Muslim control over all of India. In other words, territory makes history. People do not matter; their social or economic organization is irrelevant, while their predatory impulse is seen as genetically given. The paranoid obsession with conceptual space in this analysis is highlighted by the fact that the writer did actually live under Muslim political control (the Nizam's) at the time, and in a geographic area which was thousands of miles away from the invasion scenario he proposed.

Closer to actual battle lines, the fear of the Muslim marauder was impossible to lay to rest. Master Tara Singh, the leader of the Akali Dal at the time of Partition, remarked shortly *after* the establishment of Pakistan: 'It is true the Government [of India] is ours. But the danger before us is great. In Pakistan arms

are freely distributed and every Muslim is a soldier.'[58] In 1948, Khalid Latif Gauba, who had shown a great ability to judge the prevalent popular mood in the past, published a highly polemical condemnation of the new state of Pakistan. He stated, coincidentally employing a beautiful vision of Muslim 'India' as conceptual space,

> There is a smell of powder in the air. Men who want things in a big way are not daunted by difficulties. Jinnah wants Kashmir, he wants Bahadur Shah's crown, he wants the red stone walls of the Agra Fort to echo with Zindabads of the Qaide-Azam, he wants to receive the obeisance of the Nizam at Golconda and to lie beside Shah Jehan on the banks of the Jumna in a monument grander than the Taj.[59]

Although totally unrealistic in terms of actual political possibility, this scenario corresponded closely to what important sections of Muslim nationalism had actually dreamed of ever since the politics of self-expression had become prevalent. But the grand designs of Khaksars and Muslim League right-wingers were in themselves a product of fear, which continued unabated after the creation of Pakistan. In the years after 1947, Pakistan's Prime Minister Liaqat Ali Khan oscillated between threatening announcements that the task of restoring the glory to Islam in South Asia had not ceased with the creation of Pakistan, and public reassurances that Pakistan would never surrender.[60]

Conceptual space, both faraway and relatively closer to home, was hardly as 'empty' as the depiction of physical space on a map suggested. Conceptual space was *right from its very inception* both a battleground and a kingdom of fear. The very projection of world space through the news media was always an exercise in either defending or challenging the will to power by another community or nation. Precisely because world space was conceptual and abstract, was it so easy to colonize by power of the imagination alone. For a long time, this made it the *only* space that the Indian middle classes could hope to colonize. It was easier to pretend through a particular operation of space creation that India was independent than it was to challenge the power of a single colonial official in the local area. Imagining power by painting vast sections of a world map green or saffron was much more convenient than actually building power in the local context.

The great rush for conceptual space had the additional advantage that it was entirely unhindered by the many complexities that empirical (local) space inevitably entailed. Conceptual space was a terrain without resistance in which political concepts could be created out of amateur historiography and then unfolded according to linear causality and with magical consistency. The actual cohabitation of different religious and ethnic communities in the same territory, their complex interrelations of co-operation and hostility, the communalization of the social division of labour could all be hidden from view. The contradiction between theoretical elegance and practical intractability was as much at play in dreams of a one-nation India as it was in the idea of a territorial Muslim nation-state in South Asia. There were several other schemes for the creation of states and

statelets in the subcontinent whose political absurdity was only surpassed by their progenitors' adventures in neologism. The province of the Punjab alone was subject to at least three conflicting demands for partition into independent nation-states – 'Pakistan', 'Khalistan' and 'Acchutistan'.[61] Part of the problem was that the easy availability of conceptual space had obscured the nature of political power itself. As space was de-socialized, power was de-socialized too. The possession of geo-political territory became a fetish, as in the case of the South Indian Arya Samajist obsessed with the North West Frontier. This obsession had nothing in common with the more proverbial measurement of power in terms of 'zar, zan, zamin' ('wealth, women and land'). Land is a category of empirical space, territory one of conceptual space, and it was the latter that the middle classes were after. In extreme examples even the pictorial representation of territory could become a source of power: witness the depiction of India's borders on Khaksar 'bank notes' as a symbol of pretended sovereignty,[62] or the book cover used for one of Maulana Azhar Amritsari's ruminations about the danger facing the Islamic world today: it shows a topographic globe from an angle, and a literally earth-filling Muslim army marching from around the bend of the globe towards the observer.[63]

This obsession with conceptual map space was closely related to two characteristic features of the politics of self-expression that have been described in some detail in Chapter 2: a tendency to aestheticize politics and an inability to conceptualize 'the state' beyond a nebulous location of power. The map became a fetish because – miraculously – it enabled the adherents of self-expression to 'behold' the majesty of their national being in enigmatically condensed form. In colour-coded areas of paper, the desired 'state' suddenly became visible as a concrete and yet entirely de-societalized entity. This is why Muslim League women would attach a cutout cardboard map of the proposed Pakistan to their burkas as a visible manifestation of their hearts.[64] The most extreme fetishization of conceptual map space could be found in Savarkar's territorial, but anti-societal Hindu nationalism. We read in *Who is a Hindu?*

> The most important factor that contributes to the cohesion, strength and the sense of unity of a people is that they should possess an internally well connected and externally well demarcated 'local habitation' and a 'name' that could, by its very mention, rouse up the cherished image of their motherland as well as the loved memories of the past. (. . .) Our land is so vast and yet so strongly entrenched, that no country in the world is more closely market out by the fingers of nature as a geographical unit beyond cavil or criticism. So also is the name bharatvarsha or bharat that it has come to bear. The first image that it rouses in the mind is unmistakably of our motherland and by an express appeal to its geographical and physical features it verifies it into a living Being.[65]

Savarkar's India was an entity that did only exist in conceptual space. Its very condition of existence was the aesthetic gaze of an observer who reaches out

beyond quotidian reality. Everyday life does not provide anybody with a glimpse of a country's geographical and physical features and their alleged 'natural' geo-strategic impact.

The peculiar imagination of world space by the middle-class milieu could be so immensely persuasive and powerful because it was shielded behind two unassailable legitimizing discourses. It was based on the scientific truth of geography and astronomy, and on the inestimable merit that reading, learning and more generally keeping informed was thought to bestow. Both aspects were trump cards in political discourse. Nobody could seriously claim that reading the newspaper obfuscated an understanding of the world, or that what happened beyond the immediate horizon did not exist. For the middle-class milieu, the flight into conceptual space offered nothing less than a reversal of the established order of things. While middle-class cultural and scientific capital was irrelevant in most *local* power relations, it nevertheless gave their bearers mastery of the *world*. Little wonder that they eagerly embraced it.

## Middle-class lifeworlds

Nobody lives in conceptual space alone. It is only *one* aspect in the Hegelian trinity that Henri Lefebvre has identified as being at work in the production of space. Next to conceptual space, there is always daily life conducted in *empirical* space. Although the North Indian middle classes were undoubtedly very comfortable in imagined newspaper universes, they could not but observe the concrete places they slept and ate, worked and shopped, played and worshipped in. How did these experiences interact with the creation of conceptual space just outlined? In order to answer this question we have to adopt a more restrictive focus. One cannot convincingly discuss the empirical and concrete from an abstract and general point of view. We have therefore chosen to concentrate on one example: the city of Lahore. The capital of colonial Punjab was unquestionably one of the centres of the Urdu middle-class milieu, and also a place were many of the activists and thinkers of the politics of self-expression received formative life experiences.

The way the colonial ruling class constructed the city of Lahore – both in a physical and in an epistemological sense – was axiomatic for similar indigenous endeavours that accompanied and succeeded the era of imperialism.[66] When the British first came to Ranjit Singh's old capital, they found a place in decline, which had contracted from much larger dimensions during Mughal times to the relatively small enclosure of the walled city. This compact entity was surrounded by the ruins of ancient monuments and piles of rubble.[67] The British could appropriate this wasteland to create their very own (New) Lahore, independent and clearly separate from the existing Indian settlement. The result was a trifurcated entity which corresponded very closely to the ideal-typical concept of the colonial city as developed by Anthony King.[68] There was the indigenous town within the walls, located in the North Western corner of the city area, an extended civil station called Donald Town in the South and South East, and a belt of largely

commercial and administrative areas to act as a contact zone between Indians and Europeans.

The contrast between the walled city and the Civil Station could not be greater. The latter was several times the size of the former but accommodated only a tiny fraction of the total population. Apart from some members of the indigenous elite, servants and menials were the only Indians to be encountered outside the walled city and the contact belt.[69] Few Europeans entered the walled city and when they did they shrouded their experience in typically orientalist stereotypes of colourful but dangerous chaos.[70] The colonial rulers had ample space to accommodate themselves in bungalows surrounded by vast gardens. The life of British females and children was largely located inside these compounds, with a few excursions to the whites-only public spaces of the civil station. During the hot season, the entire household moved to one of the hill stations in the Himalayas. Although the civil station and the hill station were firmly located inside Indian society and sustained by the colonial political economy, they appeared to their white inhabitants as an entirely synthetic and idealized home away from Home.

At least in theory, (New) Lahore was a colony in the true sense, facilitating very little interaction between Indians (save the most westernized and elite circles) and Europeans. As long as the colonial power seemed secure and indigenous encroachment could be effectively policed, the inhabitants of the civil station did not have any major incentive to acknowledge the need for a new and consciously metropolitan co-existence with the Indian majority of the city. Most of the time, colonial discourses did not keep up with the effects of the rapid urbanization occurring on the ground: only at the end of the 1930s did the Punjabi administration finally conclude that Lahore was a city on a par with Bombay and Calcutta, that urban planning was more complex than a straightforward question of public health and that the policies of the municipal council (largely neglected by the British before) were important enough for life in Donald Town to merit open and sustained interference.[71]

Precisely because the British regarded only the walled city as the legitimate living space for Indians and attempted to clear encroachments into neighbouring areas as far as possible, the rapid population growth setting in after 1910 lead to severe overcrowding.[72] Degenerating living conditions and changing cultural values led many well-to-do, upwardly mobile and westernized families to build houses elsewhere. The process of suburban growth was spearheaded by the Hindu clerical class, but, by the 1920s at the latest, had also affected many Muslim families of similar social backgrounds. The exodus of the rich and aspiring from the old city created spaces for poorer migrants, who came to Lahore in increasing numbers from outside, thereby increasing pressure on living space and spawning further outmigration of the middle classes.[73]

Outside the walled city new indigenous living areas began to spring up in locations that had been empty or reserved for whites before. The process was initially facilitated by the colonial administration itself. Around 1890 the rapid expansion of the provincial bureaucracy raised the question of how to control the growing

number of Indian clerical workers.[74] Initially, most of the new recruits came from the walled city itself. For the colonial observer the consciously westernized lifestyles of their new employees were intensely comical when juxtaposed to the allegedly traditional world of the indigenous old city.[75] Presumably to undermine the close connection that these white-collar workers had with other sections of city society, and in order to gain a direct control over their daily lives, new housing estates were built in the Chauburji area, which was located directly South of the administrative centre of town. The new location implied that government clerks would no longer enter the old city (and the contact zone to a much lesser extent) during their daily routines. The principle of separation and isolation was also applied to the many employees of the North Western Railways, the police force and, most importantly of all to military personnel, who had already been shifted across the Bari Doab Canal to the Cantonment of Mian Mir in the late 1850s. For gazetted Government officers, a more lavish colony was built inside the civil station itself, facilitating incorporation into a new multi-racial bureaucratic elite.

Especially towards the closing days of the Raj, the development of more socially homogenous Indian housing colonies passed on to Indian initiatives. Members of a literate service stratum, recruited either from one of the old families of the walled city or from newcomers with connections to *mufassilite* traders, bureaucrats, landowners or farmers, began to settle in the available areas in the West, South west and extreme South of the city. Unlike the Government colonies mentioned before, the new colonies were usually segregated along religious lines, especially in the area between the Lower Mall and the river Ravi, which was within walking distance from the legal institutions, the provincial bureaucracy and most universities and colleges of the city.[76] The Southern villages of Ichhra and Mozang grew into mainly Muslim suburbs.[77] Some of the richest indigenous landowners, businessmen and professionals left the city of Lahore altogether to create their very own Punjabi version of a Civil Station under the name of Model Town, six miles to the South on Ferozepore Road. Although most of the inhabitants were Hindus and Sikhs, there were enough Muslims present to form a local branch of the Anjuman-e-Himayat-e-Islam and to build a local mosque under its aegis.[78] As in the civil station, the houses of Model Towns were located on extensive plots of land and formed self-contained universes.

How did the Indian inhabitants of Lahore construct and experience their own living spaces in the city? There are multiple answers to this question depending on the place of residence within the city, the specific curriculum vitae, the social background and the age and the gender of the person concerned. Every Lahori lived in their own specific empirical space, with the home at its centre and which was demarcated and structured by several radii of interaction, such as work, education, the purveyance of goods and services, religious observance, entertainment, holidaying and the upkeep of family relations. This and the following section attempt to provide a reconstruction of empirical space, which can be regarded as typical for those people of middling rank – mostly white-collar

employees and other professionals – who chose to set up a new home in one of the suburbs springing up during the early twentieth century.

The social ascent of the Muslim family of one Sufi Pir Bakhsh, for whom oral history material is available,[79] can serve as a good concrete example of the experience of 'sub-urbanization'. The family's founder was born into a clan of artisans-cum-traders of the Shaikh biradari, resident in the Shehranwala Gate locality of the Inner City. By the age of 16 (around 1885), Pir Bakhsh, who never attended school, began to teach himself how to read and write and later on, learnt several foreign languages. He impressed some British officials and managed to acquire a senior position at the Government Printing Press. His son, Pir Muhammad Yusuf (born in 1896) enjoyed some of the best education available at the time. He began an academic career as a physicist at Government College, but eventually chose to be headmaster at several schools in and around Lahore. His children, both sons and daughters, made respectable professional careers in independent Pakistan. In the early 1930s the family moved from their ancestral home in Shehranwala Gate into a new house in the exclusively Muslim suburb of Momenpura to the West of the Walled City, and later in the early 1950s on to the upmarket new township of Gulberg, situated across the Bari Doab Canal.

Shehranwala Gate, Momenpura and Gulberg marked three stages in a changing experience of space. The world of the Inner City of Lahore was not segregated in social terms, and only to a limited extent in religious terms. According to a later observer, 'Rich and poor, clients and patrons, servers and served, live side-by-side in houses of widely varying size and quality, and (…) as much eating, sleeping, and playing goes on in the street as inside the home.'[80] Many of the urban notables mentioned in nineteenth-century colonial lists of leading families resided inside town houses within socially mixed neighbourhoods.[81] Hindu moneylenders, who included Muslims amongst their customers preferred to live in close proximity to their clients in order to be able to exercise maximum credit control.[82] The old city possessed its own public spaces, where people of diverse backgrounds could interact in close proximity to their homes and without having to spend much money. Each shop in the Bazaar possessed an elevated platform (tharra) on which wares could be displayed during the day, and which were cleared in the evenings to serve as open discussion forums, while water pipes were passed around.[83]

When Sufi Pir Bakhsh left the old city for the suburb he did not intend to change his lifestyle completely. The new family home was built with close reference to 'traditional' housing; several two-room living units for the different parts of the extended family (which was somewhat smaller than the kinship networks of the Old City) were grouped around a central courtyard, which could be accessed from the street through a large gate. But there were some innovations as well. The street-face of the house included a veranda and an additional room which was used as an 'office'. Here Sufi Pir Bakhsh (who was long retired by the time) would meet people who came to see him in one capacity or another. The veranda was separated from the street by a wooden railing, high enough to

serve as a barrier to street life, but too low to prevent outsiders from observing veranda space. Veranda and office were clearly an echo of colonial building norms, which required some intermediate space between public and private where the official could meet visitors and distinguish the latter's rank by allowing them to penetrate this space to a varying degree.[84]

Veranda apart, Ravi Road was different to Shehranwala Gate in more general terms. The street passing in front of the house, was not a narrow, winding and easy-to-close-off *kucha*, as in the walled city, but a straight and relatively wide street in the true sense of the word. Although it was not entirely public, because it was a side road located in a residential area, access could not be entirely restricted. Sufi Street still represented a local community, but one which was far less diverse and less socially heterogeneous than in the Walled City. Apart from the Sufis and other Muslim white-collar families, the Ravi Road area did also accommodate local craftsmen, shopkeepers, washermen and sweepers.[85]

All this was no longer the case in 1950s Gulberg. Here, buildings were closely modelled after the British bungalow compound – large plots of land with a central one or two-storey building and separate servant's quarters. The compounds were sealed off by fences, hedges or walls. As a result, the street would no longer be a semi-public, semi-private space like Sufi Street with the adjacent veranda, but an empty space, whose main function lay in providing access to the house compound itself. Access was restricted (with the physical presence of a servant at the gate), which did not allow the development of the same kind of a socially heterogeneous drop-in community that had existed previously.

The spatial development of the home led from the relatively large and socially inclusive micro-universe of the muhalla to the radically different self-contained and distinctively private micro-universe of the upper-class colony. In between lay a transitional home world in which public and private were clearly separate but mediated by the in-between position of the residential street. The family of Sufi Pir Bakhsh was not the only one to make this transition;[86] the inhabitants of Model Town and the Civil Lines, for instance, had arrived at a 'compound universe' several decades earlier. It could be added, that post-independence urban reconstruction policies sought to restructure the world of the urban poor in similar ways, by offering them residential compounds *en miniature* arranged within a rectangular grid of streets and lanes.[87]

Each of the home spaces, described so far, had their own implications for the way women interacted with the social world. Although it was considered obligatory for women to cover themselves in the bazaars of the walled city – Muslims would wear a shuttle-cock burqa, Hindus a loose jador – the interior space of the muhalla itself offered a relatively large space in which women could meet with each other and interact with male inhabitants with only a minimum of gender separation. Since the kucha was not accessible to outsiders, all inhabitants could be seen as family or semi-family. In the middle-class suburb, new constructions of gender, often influenced by European models of domesticity, became more prevalent, but by no means completely dominant. Because the street was more

public than the kucha, the area in which the question of purdah did not arise shrank to the interior of the house. In places like Gulberg and Model Town, finally, women had a choice to be entirely confined to the home – there was no legitimate meeting space outside the compound at all – or to redefine the roles of purdah. One solution, which is still commonly practised in Pakistan today, is 'social purdah', which stipulates that only a minimum of gender separation is observed when meeting with visitors of similar social standing inside the home or similar shielded places, while contact with males of lower social origin is avoided, for instance, by using a car when venturing further afield.

Moving outside the home itself, the experience of Lahore was further defined by the areas visited regularly for work and education. Most locations of white-collar employment – government institutions such as the telegraph office, the postal service and the provincial government, the state-run or private banking sector, the most important newspapers and large publishing houses and the entire legal establishment – were in the relatively small area between the Lower Mall and Regal Chowk – coinciding largely with the old contact zone of the original colonial set-up. Institutions of higher education were in many cases located in the same area.[88] Both the places of work and the places to study could be easily reached from any of the middle-class suburbs in the West, South West and South of Lahore, either on foot, or by tonga and bicycle, which were the only means of transport which the middle and lower middle classes could afford.[89] While bicycles were commonly used by boys and men, the tonga was regarded as more dignified when it came to females, commonly ferrying groups of girl students from and to college or school. The only public bus in pre- Independence Lahore connected Model Town on Ferozepore Road with the administrative centre.[90]

Other radii of social interaction, notably those of shopping, entertainment and worship coincided to a large extent with the areas charted out by home and work – the new suburbia and the modern city centre. While each neighbourhood had its own small mosques and temples and its own shops, where articles of daily consumption could be procured, shopping for clothes, new consumer goods and books, visiting the cinema, the coffee house, the desi 'hotel' or the restaurant would take the middle-class suburbanite to Donald Town, Anarkali Bazaar and other areas immediately outside the city walls. Bhatti Gate, opposite the shrine of Data Ganj Bakhsh, for instance, provided a large entertainment-cum-worship complex with a number of cinema houses, eateries and sweetshops, which were popular with all religious communities. For more metropolitan tastes – restaurants and coffee houses in the Western sense or English-language films – one would go to the area on the Mall between Regal Chowk and Charing Cross. For the elite, there was the exclusive Gymkhana Club at the Southern end of the Mall.

Unlike the tharra of the Anderun Shahar, many of the new 'public' areas possessed some degree of social exclusivity. They were often situated in clearly demarcated spaces which could only be entered after purchasing a ticket. The most obvious example was, of course, the cinema, which offered tickets of various price levels to keep people of different social backgrounds separate.

But the trend towards relatively large, but nevertheless circumscribed audiences was also visible in the fields of poetry and even music, previously the privilege of the chosen few who assembled in the salons (baithak) of elite personalities. Although poetry was also performed at open mass gatherings, often organized by political parties or social associations, more formal poetry recitals (*Musha$^{c}$irat*) were increasingly held in assembly halls (with access controlled by entry fees), such as the Bradlaugh Hall or the Society for the Promotion of Scientific Knowledge (SPSK).[91] The 1930s maestro of Hindustani classical music, Abdul Karim Khan, is reported to be the first to introduce tickets to his public ('*takkia*') performances of music in Lahore.[92] The Anjuman-e-Himayat-e-Islam organized restricted discussion evenings (held in English) to which the illiterate poor had no access.[93] The restaurant and the coffeeshop were by definition off-limits to them, because they could not afford to purchase anything there.

## Exploding suburbia

As the process of suburbanization progressed, the living spaces of the middle class became increasingly homogenizing and segregating. There was less and less scope for relationships, which could have united the different population segments of Lahore city in one social fabric, where each component knew the other well and maintained daily contacts with each other. A good illustration/expression of the peculiar representation of space that this separation produced can be found in a vignette by the leftwing Urdu writer Krishan Chander entitled 'Do farlang lambi sarak' ('A street two furlongs long'), written in the late 1930s.[94]

The narrator enters into a meditation about the road – 'two furlongs long' – which he has travelled for nine years, day-in and day-out, on his way between work and home. He feels he knows it better than a close friend and tries to imagine how the road – if it possessed a soul – would have reacted to the many episodes of life that have taken place on it or at its side. But the road has no soul. It is emphatically lifeless and uncommunicative. Built of heavy stones and then asphalted over, it does not keep any traces of the life that passes on it. It is life-averse, flanked by yellowish electric lights, not allowing any proper trees to grow; in the summer heat there is no shade and the asphalt emits a sickening smell. The narrator then describes a number of scenes which the road could or should have reacted to if it had a soul: the gruesome afflictions of beggars and their humiliations at the hands of society; the obscenity and ugliness of the rich; the colonial encounter between tonga driver, corrupt policeman and white saheb; the miseries and political ruminations of industrial labourers, municipal employees, food hawkers and peasant women and finally the depressing scene of a group of unwilling and indifferent school children lined up to receive a passing dignitary. In the end, the narrator gets so disgusted by the callousness of 'the street', by the sheer pointlessness of human agency in the face of the permanency of colonial engineering, that he desperately begins to hate it. So much so that he dreams of blowing up the solid tarmac, and imagines the little pieces of stone and asphalt

scattered everywhere. But this fantasy of rebellion is quickly replaced by another. With the poignant outburst 'I do not want the freedom of this street!' he wants to rip off his clothes and be admitted to a lunatic asylum.

Before going into a brief interpretation of this text, it should be noted that the street in question is the Lower Mall in Lahore, and the narrator is implicitly identified as a Hindu middle-class office worker living somewhere in or around Krishannagar. Krishan Chander corroborates what has been said before, mainly on the basis of Muslim examples – that middle-class existence was concentrated in new housing colonies linked by wide and impersonal streets with offices in the new contact zones of Lahore. The way in which the middle-class encounter with society is depicted is itself revealing. The writer is highly conscious of social injustice, but the most immediate way to express his critical stance is by describing beggars, including the body of a homeless person who had expired unnoticed on the road itself. This along with the stereotypical reading of the labourers' and peasants' bodies and conversations are typically 'middle class'. Outraged, offended by ugliness and dirt, but essentially classifying and distant. Only the (middle-class) school children waiting for the colonial dignitary have names, and it is no coincidence that they are described in a more vibrant and life-like way than anybody else in the piece.

The socially deficient nature of middle-class life is, of course, what this vignette tries to capture in the first place. The street is a transparent metaphor for the modern everyday. It is interesting to note that it is strongly flavoured by the colonial situation, but ultimately not defined by it. Modernity itself is at stake here, as the ironic identification of 'freedom' with the street and of 'serfdom' with the lunatic asylum indicate. Like the street, life witnesses events, but nothing is able to penetrate the smooth and fortified surface of repetitive regularity. Agency is entirely denied. The street as well as modern life is not a public or communicative space, it is an empty and isolating space. In the end, there are only two choices open to the middle-class self, as mentioned in Krishan Chander's text. One could accept the new 'freedom' of modern life by participating in a world characterized by consumption and entertainment in the face of unimaginable inequality. As described in the text, this is the freedom of the fashion obsessed and shallow, who may chose whether they would like to spend the evening in Simla Pahari, Lawrence Gardens, Anarkali or Regal Cinema. But this is not a choice open to the questioning and sensitive members of the middle class who can only arrest a slow descent into insanity through an act of violent rebellion. The dream of exploding a hard constraining surface is precisely what the politics of self-expression was all about, as it sought to shatter the crust of convention that imprisoned the middle-class self.

Middle-class life was not only segregated according to class, but also according to religion. In many cases, the two overlapped and re-enforced each other. While the Punjabi provincial elite – large landowners, agro-financiers and senior bureaucrats of all three religious communities – attended each other's family celebrations and invested into each other's joint stock companies across religious

lines, the middle classes erected impermeable boundaries, which helped to sustain feelings of hostility and distrust. According to the family history of Sufi Pir Bakhsh, the dividing line between Muslim Momenpura and the neighbouring Hindu suburb of Qila Lakhshman Singh was often absolute. The Muslim middle classes were nevertheless very conscious of the existence of their Hindu and Sikh counterparts. Some, like Sufi Pir Bakhsh's grandson, met them daily at school, in a context of fierce competition; others encountered them at work; quite a few Muslims, who went to schools established by religious trusts and worked in Muslim offices, knew about a rival middle class not so much from direct experience, but because it fitted in with their Muslim nationalist political ideals. What the Muslim middle class by and large refused to see, was that there were also poor and lower-class Hindus in Lahore. Being Hindu itself was seen as tantamount to arrogant middle-class supremacism. For the Hindu mercantile and professional classes, in contrast, Lahore as a whole was a Hindu city, which they expected to go to India after Partition. The Muslim majority was seen as an undistinguished mass of the urban poor, workers and menials whom one would occasionally employ for business.[95] If there were rich and powerful Muslims, they were associated with the dreaded land-owning elite organized in the Unionist Party. The existence of a rival Muslim middle class was consistently denied. Lakshmi Chand Mehta, a contemporary observer estimated that Lahore was '70 to 75 per cent Hindu' and that Muslims only belonged to the lower orders.[96] Both sections of the middle-class milieu were convinced that they were a social segment under threat from above and below, but without having to recognize any commonality of interest with adherents of other religions.

The urban space that Mehta and others saw in such simplistic and segregated terms was no longer only empirical space in Lefebvre's sense. The immediate places of life and work had already been connected with a concept of city space that was seen as an extension of the global conceptual space outlined before. It is only logical that de-socialization and conflict should be the main characteristics of the imagined city, as they were of the imagined world. But it is important not to push the easy and immediate correspondence between empirical space and conceptual space too far. A decidedly low-brow example from the world of commercial literature captures this point perfectly. In *Zalim Daku* ('The Cruel Gangster')[97], Detective Hameed, a mixture of customary Punjabi machismo and scientific sophistication, is hunting a typically Indian gangster lord through the streets of Lahore and its environs. The fictional city described is a very strange place indeed: to begin with, there is not a single recognizably Hindu or Sikh character in the entire book, not even as a villain. The Lahore of the novel is exclusively Muslim space, although there are some white colonialists around. In an eerie premonition of the ethnically cleansed spaces of future Pakistan, competing religious 'communities' are simple wished away.

There is also a sense of complete social vacuum. The hero, a young student lives alone with his servant; he has friends but no relatives. Another character elopes with a girl and promptly checks into a hotel to spend the night (no questions

asked), no details about the usual social background to such action is provided. The girl is later kidnapped from a train and imprisoned by a gangster, who wants to extinguish all hope of a return to her old lover by having the latter killed. But the person he picks up from yet another hotel is somebody else of the same name, a hapless student who thus gets murdered in vain. There is no moral sense of right and wrong in the enduring battle between detective and gangster. Both are equally striking incarnations of Punjabi masculinity, only that the detective is ultimately more successful. This space is not only ethnically cleansed, but it has also become an urban jungle, a societally cleansed space.

Although there is clearly some form of similarity between the empirical spaces of urban Lahore and the kind of segregation and de-socialization depicted here, the conceptual Lahore of the novel remains on the whole unconvincing. It is difficult to mistake this for 'real', even though the space described shares a great deal with the conceptual space of global warfare that was indeed taken as unquestionably real by the middle-class milieu. Why? Leaving the limited literary talent of the author aside, the most important reason seems to be the fact that a suburbanized Lahore is depicted as a *heroic* space, where adventures take place and independent young people can prove their mettle. Empirical suburban Lahore, in contrast, was a highly regulated space, like the impregnable tarmac of a metalled road regimented by work, education and family respectability. It was not that 'real' heroism was entirely impossible in middle-class space, but it usually resided further away from home than the immediate city; heroism was the prerogative of the depths of history and the expanses of the global battlefield of nations – in short, of conceptual space. It was only the politics of self-expression itself that finally brought heroism 'home', sporadically at first and then more lastingly during the months of action in 1946 and 1947.

## Holidays and camps

Despite a certain amount of congruence, conceptual space did not immediately map onto empirical space, or vice versa. A complete fusion was possible only with the help of that third instance of space creation that Lefebvre called *representational space*. Conceptual space had to be made concrete in an empirical location that was capable of creating an especially poignant and significant spatial experience. Like the modern monarch as incarnation of the State, representational spaces had to be both tangible and extraordinary; they had to stand out and be demarcated from the world of the everyday.

In the case of the space production in the urban middle-class milieu, the role of representational space was highly complex. To begin with, there were plenty of spaces of the representational sort that the urban middle-class milieu encountered in their extended life worlds. But, as the following discussion will point out, most of them concretized a kind of spatial experience that was somewhat out of kilter with the other instances of space production. These spaces were mediating concretizations not of the suburb and the universe of global warfare, but of

an older and more inclusive form of social space. In the final analysis, this contradiction did not seriously undermine the predominance of the much harsher middle-class spaces described before, but it meant that that the politics of self-expression itself acquired a paramount role in spatial representation; for it was only political action that could provided substantial concretizing experiences between the empirical space of the suburb and the conceptual space of global warfare.

It is hard to think of an extraordinary space that could directly fuse the socially anaemic but highly regimented empirical everyday with the de-socialized heroism of the conceptual global battlefield. The staged political or scientific debate in one of the reform associations provided relevant moments, as did the collective poetry recital (*musha*$^{c}$*irat*). The most effective representational space that comes to mind is the cinema. It offered a clearly defined spatial experience that was poignantly different from the everyday; it was socially anaemic in the sense that it admitted only people with moderate means and, then, as individuals; it imposed a sense of (relative) suburban order on the audience by allocating a separate and numbered seat to each ticket holder. The cinema environment was saturated with middle-class consumption – advertising for film as well as advertising on film; the novelty and excitement of the medium itself; the hawkers selling cookies, tea and the like during the interval. At the same time, the cinema was a launch pad into conceptual space *par excellence*; it focused the more or less undivided attention of the audience on history and heroism (amongst other themes), and with the news reel literally on global media space; finally, it employed the most powerful reality effects then available to make conceptual space tangible.

In the case of most other representational spaces in urban middle-class experience no such perfect mediation between empirical and conceptual space occurred. On the contrary, representational space put up an awkward resistance against the reality of empirical space itself. A number of people with a middle-class background had blood relations or family friends in the walled city, whom they went to see from time to time, especially for celebrations such as weddings.[98] In the case of Pir Bakhsh's family, parts of the kinship network remained suitcase makers and vendors in Shehranwala Gate. Why not regard such visits as part of everyday empirical space? It is important to remember that blood ties did not necessarily imply very close relationships or frequent visits. Family networks could be so large as to make them literally 'unfamiliar'. Pir Bakhsh's grandson, for instance, has more than 100 first cousins, some of whom he has never met. Family branches who had remained in the walled city were literally located beyond a barrier of class and culture. Visiting them was not part of routine exchange, but an extraordinary encounter with another world. The emotional flavour of the occasion was likely to be different from the everyday as well: celebrations of family unity, perhaps, rather than the everyday bickering associated with domestic life.

Another reason for a suburban Muslim to venture into the Muslim commercial areas of the Inner City (such as Kashmiri Bazaar) was the purchase of clothes and

jewellery for special occasions, such as Eid or weddings. The more fashionable shops in Anarkali, it has to be remembered, were mostly owned by Hindus and could be seen as inappropriate for goods with a strong emotional or religious significance. Religious festivals would draw all communities to their main sites of worship, some of which, like the Badshahi Masjid, the Gurudwara of Ram Das or the Hanuman Temple in Gomti Bazaar, were located in or close to the Inner City. Religious or profane fairs, the kite-flying festivals of Basant in particular, would also attract people from the suburbs to the more atmospheric housetops of the walled city.[99]

Once again, these occasions imply somewhat extraordinary circumstances: leisure rather than work; the anticipation that goes with a special shopping trip, sweetened up by the hospitality of the bazaar traders, rather than the need to purchase an item of daily necessity; being guests or explorers rather than neighbours or work colleagues. The Old City looked, felt and smelt differently from the middle-class colony and turned every trip into an exploration of a new or lost world, which the visitor never quite became part of. In extreme cases, this mixture of wonder and distance came close to the perception, which colonialists such as Kipling had of the walled city. A good example can be found in the memoirs of Som Anand, a journalist resident of Model Town until 1947, who was brought up in the city and continued to observe it closely. His account is revealingly entitled 'The bizarre world of inner Lahore', and although rich in well-observed detail, portrays the place like a human zoo.[100] The author unwittingly spoke of himself when he declared that 'the old city gave outsiders the feeling that they had come to Baghdad of the Arabian Nights'[101]. Unlike most colonial observers, Som Anand did go to the old city regularly and was not afraid of it, but his trips were always into the extraordinary, holidays or excursions with the direct purpose of observing the 'bizarre', not the normal everyday interactions of the insider. These excursions were often linked to a taste of authenticity, whether it was in relation to the food cooked in tandoors,[102] or the spectacle of the general hustle-bustle of traders, labourers and burqa-clad women.

A defining moment of the year was the annual summer holiday in the Hill Station which had become a habit for relatively wide sections of the white-collar stratum. According to a personal recollection, anybody holding the rank of a second-class gazetted officer or above could afford the annual holiday. Dalhousie was a destination frequently advertised in Urdu middle-class papers such as *Zamindar* and *Inqilab*.[103] Travellers of modest means would almost always be unaccompanied men, unable to bring their families with them.[104] More affluent Lahoris, from the upper echelons of the service stratum or the elite itself, often rented entire houses and brought their wives and children with them; they spent long periods in places like Simla or in Kashmir, replicating the habits of their British overlords.[105] Holidaying offered an experience of the Punjab and the Northern Hills as an extended space, beginning with a long train ride or car journey to Rawalpindi, Pathankot or elsewhere and then continuing on newly established coach lines to the holiday destination. Memories from idealized trips

into a beautiful landscape, unburdened with the experience of social contradictions, lent themselves to be woven into a construction of an idealized Punjab from which the members of the service class were separated by virtue of their professions and place of residence in the rapidly modernizing city.

Another very common long-distance journey into representational space was experienced by the many members of the service stratum whose families came from outside Lahore. Besides the present family home there was the ancestral home in the proverbial *pind* (village), usually maintained by relations who had stayed behind. The ties to the ancestral home were often coloured by childhood memories, the affection of grandparents and cousins, by family celebrations and similar events. The memory of a bygone area of 'traditional life' which was the logical outcome of growing up in an age of change, fused with the spatial difference between the capital city and the provincial backwater, thereby replicating the dichotomy of suburb and the walled city on a much larger, province-wide scale.

All political parties involved in the politics of self-expression deliberately created occasions which would temporarily take their activists out of the empirical space of the segregated suburb and into the 'real life' of more complex and inclusive representational spaces. Especially from the middle of the 1940s onwards, the Congress, the Muslim League and the Communist Party of India all sent out their young middle-class followers to convince 'ordinary' people of the worthiness of their respective causes. Almost anybody who became politicized in this period experienced exciting, but time-limited encounters in different social worlds: the Muslim Government College boy from Lahore trying to persuade peasants in Multan district; the offspring of a Hindu Rawalpindi trading family addressing salt miners in the hills; most striking of all perhaps, the daughter of the former Premier of the Punjab riding around on her bicycle selling the *People's War* to the workers. Women and teenage girls, in particular, got an opportunity to break out of their sheltered suburban existence and to visit places that were seen as dangerous or unbecoming for them. Political activism even made the free mixing of the sexes sometimes permissible. Sufi Pir Bakhsh's teenage granddaughter stuck Haji Laqlaq's pro-Muslim League verses on a placard, got together with male and female comrades, and went out to 'organize' the Muslim population in the *muhallas* of the walled city.[106]

The aforementioned forays into social complexity – family visits, excursions, holidays and political crusades – were marked out as special precisely because they occurred in self-conscious opposition to the everyday. Representational space of this sort de-normalized the empirical space of the everyday by providing rose-tainted glimpses of an alternative way of life; but as isolated and idealized occasions, they did not posit durable alternatives. The effect could be compared to the impact that a single blade of grass breaking through the tarmac of his hated street would have had on Krishan Chander's middle-class observer. No doubt, he would have found it especially precious and significant. But the blade of grass was not necessarily a symbol of hope; as long as it remained a solitary occurrence it could make the observer realize even more starkly than before, just

how hard and isolating this tarmac really was. The contrasting instance could simultaneously undermine the moral validity of empirical space, but strengthen its reality.

The experience of sociability, inclusiveness and 'authenticity' in certain representational spaces – for instance, when attending an ᶜId prayer at Badshahi Masjid where rich and poor bowed towards Mecca in unison; or when 'organizing' real workers – demonstrated above all else, how isolating, segregating and anti-social the suburban everyday had become. The dissatisfaction with an inescapable reality gave rise to a powerful sense of *rage* with immense destructive, but little critical potential: Krishan Chander facing the choice between an act of vandalism and the lunatic asylum; Mashriqi hurling abuse against the middle-class family; Chishti and Niazi revelling in anticipations of violence whilst abusing the elders for being too rational.

Rage did not confront empirical space by proposing a better alternative; it simply drove the adherents of the politics of self-expression into the vast expanses of conceptual space, where pseudo-alternatives could be conjured up with little social resistance and, courtesy of geography and the media, with great reality effect. The dreaded empirical spaces of middle-class life were only outflanked, but not really changed. Nothing illustrates this lack of critical potential more starkly than the alternative spaces that the politicians of self-expression themselves created in order to exemplify their political goals. From Khaksars to Muslim League, Congress to RSS and CPI, the preferred spatial incarnation of their political goals was the spiritual–military training camp. Some blueprints survive, for instance for a Khaksar camp (in the Punjabi city of Gujrat).[107] The plans show a strict demarcation between inside and outside; the camp is surrounded by mock fortifications complete with watch towers. Compartmentalization and regularity are the main principles of design. It is achieved, quite literally, by dividing participants into different military units which can be marched up, unit by unit, quadrangle by quadrangle, in order to be 'inspected' from a central main square. In all training camps, including communist and Congress-run ones, a strict compartmentalization of time was paramount. Waking up and going to sleep at specified hours; the rest of the day devoted to organized blocks of spinning in silence, political instruction, paramilitary techniques and so on. All this represents a middle-class ideal of being saved from being middle class.

These camps were, of course, also concrete incarnations of conceptual space. They sought to make globalized visions of the nation at war immediately tangible. All camps in question included only members of the respective imagined nation; there were no troublesome others who were present in real life, but either confronted or expurgated in conceptual space. Social relationships were deliberately hidden. The clearest example is the Khaksar, Muslim League National Guards and RSS insistence on uniforms and military hierarchies. Both deliberately denied that the social background of their members had any value. What counted was exclusively the activists' military functionality. Within the camp, 'real' people had indeed become armies; they could be enumerated and then be

'deployed' according to great strategic plans, formulated with the requirements of geo-politics in mind. It is needless to add at this point that the concretization of the national army in such camp spectacles was part of the wider tendency to aestheticize politics. In all these cases the show was the message; there was no political argument made, other than that the national soul had been incarnated in the regularity and beauty of the marching column.

It is ironic to note that the political–military training that was designed in conscious opposition to the empirical everyday was in fact one of the few powerful and straightforward representational space of the new middle-class reality. This was a place – like the cinema – in which the suburban empirical space and global conceptual space were simultaneously present in a concrete and poignant form. Unlike the many excursions into an alternative life, the training camp represented a *non-contradictory* and truly middle-class space form. It thus finally fell to the politics of self-expression itself to create the representational spaces that made the middle-class world truly 'real'.

The hunger for concretization, inherent in the contradictory nature of the middle-class production of space, was one of the driving forces behind the course of Indian politics. After the breakdown of the period of communal cooperation in the early 1920s, India witnessed an increasing number of conflicts over disputed buildings or disputed spaces. Two of the most famous examples – the Shahidganj dispute in Lahore and the Babri Masjid controversy in Ayodhya have already been mentioned in Chapter 2. Such episodes not only concretized conceptual space by offering concrete places over which power disputes could be fought out. The experiences of confrontation with the state authorities that accompanied such disputes over space helped to fuel the prevailing rage against the empirical space of the everyday. Demonstrations were ideal occasions on which the middle-class activist could leave suburbia to merge with a multitude of co-religionists for a common goal. The experience of the crowd was perhaps the most powerful representational space of all. It felt simultaneously warm and real, while being entirely de-socialized. It was perhaps the only place where the desire for a more 'authentic' life and the simultaneous hatred of the social could be combined in a unique fashion. Coming back from such an experience, the activists were thrown back into the unbearable dreariness of their immediate life world. It is little wonder that 'action' – the staging of local contests with a global meaning – became an addictive aim in itself.

## Conclusion

The deep roots of the politics of self-expression lay in material structures. Its conceptual space was entirely based on the double impact of modern geography and the news media and would have been impossible without them. This was the case anywhere that radical nationalism became a serious political alternative. But the connection between de-socialized zero-sum politics and conceptual space was particularly close within the context under review. Both the limited economics of

scale in the printing sector and the prevalence of high cultural capital propelled the Urdu middle-class stratum towards the world, as it were, and let the local slip out of its field of vision. The same tendency was reinforced by the restructuring of urban living spaces which increasingly became homogenized and sanitized.

Conceptual space functioned right from its inception as an amplifier of communal conflict. As pointed out elsewhere in this book, pre-existing community loyalties were picked up by a highly competitive print sector desperate for stories that appealed to as many consumers as possible. Unlike in the much older and more established newspaper universes of Europe, conceptual space in North India itself was always defined by conflict.

Although the relationship between conceptual and empirical space was one of relative correspondence – a de-socialized global universe on one side and a de-socialized suburban colony on the other – their mediation was never smooth or straightforward. The reason was that certain representational spaces offered some resistance by providing the middle class with a glimpse of what a more inclusive social space could be like. Such glimpses were too brief and extraordinary to seriously critique social reality, but they were significant enough to generate a powerful sense of rage against middle-class existence itself. Insofar as this rage simply propelled people back to the greener pastures of conceptual space, it was not a serious threat to the middle-class production of space as a whole. But this rage had a second outlet: the politics of self-expression absorbed it and, in the process, changed from being a mere *outcome* of the middle-class production of space to being one of its main stabilizing agents. It was nothing other than politics that produced the most epistemologically satisfying mediators between conceptual and empirical space in the Urdu middle-class universe: the organized crowd and the military training camp. Middle-class politics made middle-class space as much as middle-class space determined middle-class politics.

# 5

# THE CONSUMPTION OF POLITICS

The politics of self-expression became the dominant political culture in the Urdu middle-class milieu because the crucial matter of class could only be posited at the polar ends of political space. On the one hand, people were middle class by virtue of how they fashioned their bodies; this made corporeal and mental experiences central to political articulation. On the other hand, there was a characteristically middle-class way of connecting the increasingly alienated living spaces in modernizing cities with the vast expanses of the media universe; this gave self-expressionism its proclivity to flee into the abstract, the global and the meta-historical. What the colonized middle classes were unable to grasp politically was the space between these polar opposites: the world of concrete socio-economic relations where class is immediately constituted. This inability has been attributed to the continuing dominance of a politics of interest – a system based on patronage networks and communal interest groups, which enabled the colonial state to exercise control over a society that it could not otherwise penetrate. The people of the Urdu middle-class milieu were part and parcel of this grid of power, but not as a class, only as self-interested individuals or as members of pre-political religious, caste or *biradari* communities.

In this final chapter, the inability to think about politics in a societal manner will be explained in a more general framework that connects the politics of self-expression as a distinctly colonial political culture to larger global developments. In a way, this is where this book started out from: with the question of how and why fragments of fascistic ideology and behaviour entered political culture in the Indian subcontinent. But, as the following exposition is meant to demonstrate, the issues at stake are much wider than just fascism; the politics of self-expression appears as an early indication for a comprehensive impossibility of politics in a high-modern (some would say post-modern) universe. Social structures – and the possibilities to act upon them – have been progressively and perhaps unalterably changed by the rise of what sociologists have called a 'consumer society'.[1] The Urdu middle-class milieu was in many ways the product of such transformations. This chapter ventures into social and cultural theory, and relies on a range of sources that have not hitherto received much attention in the historiography of South Asia. The exposition will take time to unfold, and the connections between

an emerging consumer society and political culture will not be immediately apparent. This is why this chapter begins with a longer introductory section than the others, providing the reader with a suggestive glimpse of what the overall argument is getting at.

## Consumption and politics: outlines of a connection

Finding the right terminology for countries, nations, movements and political functionaries was one of the self-expressionists' great preoccupations. In many cases names mattered more than the things they were actually meant to designate. The authors of the *Khilafat-e-Pakistan Scheme*, for instance, spent most of their creative energy on finding appropriate Islamic-sounding terms for state institutions but paid little attention to how these institutions were supposed to operate. Amongst other things, they insisted that their country needed a '*bait ul-mal*' (lit. 'House of Property') instead of a 'State Bank' even though they openly acknowledged that there was no substantive difference between the two.[2] This was not simply a matter of translation. Both terms were equally 'foreign' to the linguistic context of North India, but the Arabic term conjured up a link with the time of the Prophet of Islam that suggested a sense of justice and common welfare, while the English equivalent smacked of an illegitimate European presence. Names were believed to encapsulate an inner authenticity that was in accord with the larger national soul. Something similar was at play when Calcutta, Bombay and Madras were renamed Kolkata, Mumbai and Chennai over the last decade, or when the regime of Pervez Musharraf claimed that calling the 'District Commissioner' a 'District *Nazim*' would make a real difference to how this figure related to the people.

The most explicit and philosophically grounded approach to the politics of naming was to be found in the oeuvre of V.D. Savarkar. His famous pamphlet *Hindutva: Who is a Hindu?* actually started off with a meditation on the ontological status of names. This was necessary because the recasting of Hindu identity as 'Hindutva' was directly grounded in the belief that the abolition of the European term 'Hinduism' would lead to substantive changes in the nature of the Hindu community itself. Savarkar's reasoning went as follows:

> The very fact that a thing is indicated by a dozen names in a dozen human tongues disarms the concomitance between sound and the meaning it conveys. Yet, as the association of the word with the thing grows stronger and lasts long, so does the channel which connects the two states of consciousness tend to allow an easy flow of thoughts from one to another, till at last it seems almost impossible to separate them. And when in addition to this, a number of secondary thoughts or feelings that are generally roused by the thing get mystically entwined with the word that signifies it, the name seems to matter as much as the thing itself. (…) … there are words which imply an idea in itself extremely complex

> or an ideal or a vast and abstract generalization which seem to take, as it were, a being unto themselves or live and grow as an organism would do. (…) Inscribe at the foot of one of those beautiful paintings of 'Madona' [*sic*] the name 'Fatima' and a Spaniard would keep gazing at it as curiously as at any other piece of art; but just restore the name of 'Madona' instead, and behold his knees would lose their stiffness and bend, his eyes their inquisitiveness and turn inwards in adoring recognition, and his whole being get suffused with a consciousness of the presence of Divine Motherhood and Love![3]

Savarkar's ruminations describe nothing less than a reification of names. Although he said earlier in the pamphlet that things matter more than names, he ends up with the very opposite – that a name makes all the difference for how people interact with things. In fact, as the case of the Spanish Madonna demonstrates, things may no longer matter at all. The example assumes that there is nothing meaningful about the depicted figure as such; meaning is entirely produced by the label. A tentative step towards some form of Sassurian linguistics – that there is really no inherent connection between name and thing, the signifier and the signified – is taken in order to make names appear as if they were the only things that really existed. This manoeuvre was necessary for Savarkar's entire political enterprise. He had to detach names from things in order to be free to create a new name – 'Hindutva' – that was independent of social structures on the ground; having done this, Savarkar then had to start to assume that there was some 'organic' substance to his neologism in order to give it relevance and solidity.

A somewhat similar process of symbolic investment of names was at play in the Pakistan movement. Following the work of Ayesha Jalal, it has now become part of the scholarly consensus that the demand for 'Pakistan' could be politically effective, precisely because the exact meaning of the term was never really spelt out.[4] Chaudhri Rehmat Ali's original coinage was based on an acronym involving letters from the names of each of 'Pakistan's' prospective provinces – 'P' for Punjab, 'A' for Afghania, 'K' for Kashmir and so on, but this was nothing more than an exercise in name fetishism that few Muslim nationalists at the time took very seriously.[5] The alternative reading of Pakistan as 'Land of the Pure' was hardly more precise. A UP Muslim League leader could tell a crowd of supporters that '*Pak*'-istan had no territorial basis, but was simply everywhere that Muslims practiced their faith properly.[6] Ismat Chughtai, the socialist and feminist writer growing up under the shadow of the movement, captured the combination of emotional expectations and the power of signs as follows:

> They were to have Pakistan. Along with the Taj Mahal, Moti Masjid and Laal Qila, the entire hallowed world, under the silvery moon's shadow, happily engulfed in fasting and prayer, would slowly slide towards paradise. Their allotted portion was to be handed to them. A copper 'P' was already selling at every betel-leaf shop.[7]

Apart from recognizing the geographical indeterminacy of 'Pakistan' – all the places mentioned eventually ended up in 'India' – this description also points to something immediately relevant for this chapter. Like the 'P' in Pakistan, names and even letters could be quite literally turned into fetishes or talismans. The magic of Pakistan as a political ideal lay in the fact that people could project their own hopes and aspirations – for states of empowerment and *rausch*, justice and social equality, religious purity and historical greatness – on to a cipher that became all the more evocative the more people interacted with it.

It is easy to place the preoccupation with naming in the context of late colonial middle-class politics. The creation of terminologies for states and institutions, communities and imaginary armies could propose something radically new without having to deal with the complexities of political action on the ground. The most prolific of neologists were typically those excluded from politics – Savarkar in prison, Rehmat Ali in Cambridge – or members of erstwhile political sects who suddenly found themselves at the core of nationalist movements – such as Mashriqi or the authors of the *Scheme*. The desire to take possession of something by literally 'branding' it with a name was paramount; the actual qualities of the thing in question – its use value so to speak – secondary. No doubt, there was a sense of joyful creativity in conjuring up names. The drafting of new terminologies generated a state of temporary elation that fed upon the self-expressionist longing for power, beauty and states of de-societalization. Naming was a natural component of the desire to communicate essential being to 'the eyes of the world' and of an aestheticism that revelled in the beauty of political language or the regularity of paramilitary displays. The ultimate roots of the politics of naming were the same that sustained the politics of self-expression more generally: a middle-class existence that bred both frustration and ambition, but did not provide much room for constructive radical politics. But there appears to be a more direct and specific link between middle-class culture and the politics of naming – consumption as a new form of social communication.

Let us approach this subject matter by suggesting a striking homology. The aforementioned examples of name politics bring to mind a certain passage in Jean Baudrillard's *The System of Objects* – a late 1960s exploration of modern consumer society. Under the enigmatic heading 'GARAP', he described the following mind experiment:

> Picture for a moment our modern cities stripped of all signs, their walls blank as an empty consciousness. And imagine that all of a sudden the single word GARAP appears everywhere, written on every wall. A pure signifier, having no referent, signifying only itself, it is read, discussed, interpreted in a vacuum, signified despite itself – in short, consumed qua sign. What indeed can it signify except for the society itself that it is capable of generating such a sign? By virtue of its very lack of signification it mobilizes an entire imaginary collectivity. (. . .) In a way, people end up 'believing' in GARAP. They consider it the mark of advertising's

> omnipotence, and judge that if only GARAP would assume the specificity of a product, then that product would meet with an immediate and sweeping success. (…) Were a specific referent to be made explicit, individual resistance would certainly come back into play. But consent (even ironic consent) thus founded on faith in a pure sign is self-creating. Advertising's true referent is here apparent in its purest form: like GARAP, advertising is mass society itself, using systematic arbitrary signs to arouse emotions and mobilize consciousness, and reconstituting its collective nature in this very process.[8]

This vignette would not lose its suggestive power if the meaningless phrase 'GARAP' was replaced by some of the not exactly meaningless, but meaning-poor creations of the political self-expressionism in North India. 'Pakistan', 'Hindutva' and many other contemporary political names made their appearance in the way described by Baudrillard, by suddenly invading both print space and – in the form of flags, poems, posters and graffiti – also public space. Both neologisms began to define imaginary but strongly believed-in collectivities precisely because no specific referent was ever made explicit. This was the same miracle experienced by consumers seeing 'GARAP'. An enigmatic but self-referential cipher that attracted meaning from nowhere and without much discursive preparation. The resulting condensate of meaning was then described with nebulous terms suggesting mystical depth, such as national 'essence' or 'soul'. The result were communities of people held together by the fact that they related to an enigmatic, but evocative name in similar ways.

Baudrillard understood the magic solidification of empty ciphers as characteristic of a new kind of social communication that emerged in the period of mass consumption. This raises an interesting question about the socio-genesis of self-expressionism. The politics of naming coincided precisely with the appearance of branded commodities, the use of advertising in print and film, and the proliferation of metropolitan consumer goods in the Urdu middle-class milieu. There is nothing outlandish about the connection between political culture and consumption; it has been documented and explored, with varying degrees of theoretical depth, in several studies of nineteenth and early twentieth-century Europe, North America and more recently China.[9] The absence of similar attempts in the South Asian context seems to be related to a sense of political unease. The early and mid-twentieth century was the age of nationalism, and the language of nationalism is deadly serious; it speaks of sacrifice, fighting to the death, of self-respect and grand projects of change. The language of advertising in contrast is frivolous; it focuses on the little things of daily life and represents them in gaudy colours. In an ideological universe where overcoming the everyday world for the sake of something greater was a primary objective, an insistence on the importance of such mundane trivia must appear as an unfathomable denigration. In a certain sense it is, and deliberately so; there is no denying that the basic stance of this book regards the harbouring after the 'great' as a pathological self-indulgence,

and valourises concern for the small and the immediate as truly critical and political. But other readings of the argument need to be rejected right from the start. The emphasis on material culture in an exploration of political culture is not a replication of the colonialist manoeuvre of imputing material self-interest to nationalist activists. To argue that certain forms of nationalist ideology were guided by the logic of consumption is not the same as to suggest that nationalists were insincere and only after the good things in life. Consumption was never a question of personal morality in this sense, but a structural force that refashioned the fundamental logic of social communication. The point is not that middle-class nationalists were insincere, rather that there was something deeply problematic about the very cult of sincerity most of them subscribed to.

The universal need of post-colonial societies to protect the memory of the nationalist struggle has been compounded in the South Asian context by the widespread espousal of a culture of frugality. Nobody exemplifies this better than the figure of Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi – the Mahatma who rejected most of the amenities of normal life and insisted on wearing little more than a loincloth. Indian nationalism, and to an extent also Pakistani nationalism, were in the eyes of their followers not only too sincere and important to be involved in consumerism, they also appear to have taken a direct stance against it. The body-politics of self-expressionism as described in Chapter 2, and the constant need to defend the middle-class body against the ill effects of modern life mentioned in Chapter 3, are testimony to what appears to be a highly critical attitude to middle-class comforts. But again, this would be missing the point. Anti-consumerism of this kind was not opposed to a political culture ruled by consumption, but in fact one of its most striking manifestations. The false assumption is the conflation of consumption with affluence or comfort. Nothing could be further from the truth; as this chapter will demonstrate, the demonstrative expression of austerity is under certain circumstances no less consumerist than the demonstrative expression of affluence.

## Consumption and social identities: why Baudrillard?

Having thus established the wider problematic of this chapter and its implications, it is necessary to construct a theoretical roadmap that will guide us on our trek through the evidence and help us to unlock its significance. My main reference remains Jean Baudrillard – more precisely his first three books, *The System of Objects* (1968), *The Consumer Society* (1970) and *For a Critique of the Political Economy of the Sign* (1972).[10] This choice requires some justification. Baudrillard is mainly known for his later works that develop a very radical argument about the effective unreality of the 'hyper-reality' produced by the 'simulacra and simulations' of the post-modern media universe.[11] At some point, he famously claimed that, for all matters and purposes, the (first) US–Iraq war 'did not take place'.[12] Whatever one makes of the point itself, this is clearly something that only applies to a social context dominated by 24-hour news channels. It is little

wonder that the South Asian social science literature – let alone history – have not seen any need to engage much with Baudrillard.

Baudrillard's earlier explorations of a *société de consommation* are situated in the period of mass affluence that existed in the post-War industrialized world. *The Consumer Society* begins with a survey of 'profusion' and attests the existence of a 'kind of fantastic conspicuousness of consumption and abundance, constituted by the multiplication of objects, services and material goods'.[13] This is followed by a reading of shopping malls and drugstores as 'total environments' of consumption.[14] Once again, all this is miles away from the social reality of 1930s and 1940s North India, even as far as the relatively well-off middle-class milieu is concerned. But this should not prevent us from thinking with Baudrillard's arguments. After all, the invocation of affluence in *The Consumer Society* was more rhetorical than substantial; Baudrillard's main thrust was to *debunk* authors such as J.K. Galbraith who believed that affluence alone could change society. The conspicuous proliferation of material wealth was stressed by Baudrillard in order to give his real point greater force – that it was all a diabolical sham. As he asserted in a key passage, 'instead of prodigality, we have "consumption", forced consumption in perpetuity, twin sister to scarcity. (…) It is our social logic which condemns us to luxurious and spectacular penury.'[15]

The route to this conclusion took Baudrillard through the anthropology of 'primitive societies'. All his early works drew strongly on the classic authors in the field – Malinowski, Mauss, Levi-Strauss, Sahlins – and commented on social phenomena such as potlatch, cargo-cult, prodigal feasts and gift exchange.[16] To run the *apparent* affluence of modern consumer society up against such primordial practices was precisely what enabled Baudrillard to make his main point – that the political economy of production, governed by use value and exchange value, had to be supplemented by a political economy of the sign, based on 'symbolic exchange value'.[17] This entailed the realization that the realm of production – the very site where material affluence was constituted – was an ideological cover for something else more ancient and profound – the need of society to continually reproduce hierarchy and difference in social communication. The main point about the consumer society was not so much that it had driven capitalist commodity production to unprecedented heights, but the way in which this commodity production collided with an autonomous grid of socio-political power.

In *The Consumer Society*, Baudrillard identified two angles of analysis from which the process of consumption should be seen:

> 1 As a *process of signification and communication*, based on a code into which consumption practices fit and from which they derive their meaning. Consumption is here a system of exchange, and the equivalent of a language. (…)
> 2 As a *process of classification and social differentiation* in which sign/objects are ordered not now merely as significant differences in a code but as status values in a hierarchy.[18]

This followed on from his earlier observation that modern consumer goods are sign objects constituting a comprehensive system of communication. For Baudrillard, this was particularly apparent in 'models' and 'series' of products, in which items with a very similar use value are distinguished by added identity features – a gradation of products by the appearance of exclusivity, naturalness, antiquity, scientific innovation and so on. This 'personalization' of products meant that products ranging from cars and washing powder to pieces of furniture could be used to demarcate specific lifestyles.[19] The magic of consumer society rests in the fact that it presents individual consumers with 'freedom', 'aspiration' and 'choice' but really ties them down in a cast-iron grid of social hierarchy: 'Each individual experiences his differential social gains as absolute gains; he does not experience the cultural constraint which means that positions change, but the order of differences remains.'[20]

A substantive advantage of Baudrillard's early work is that – remaining within the orbit of Marxism – he still thought in terms of *contradiction* – between sign and use value, for instance, or between the promise of individual betterment and the cementation of hierarchy. This opens up his work to a 'Leninist' reading. If contradiction is a major theoretical point, it is not only entirely legitimate, but particularly relevant to use it in a context where contradiction is most pronounced.

This means that consumer culture in the North Indian context does not have to be treated as an imperfect or inconsequential replica of what existed in the industrialized world, but rather as a case in which the true nature of consumer society reveals itself even more clearly than in its more developed forms. The field of advertising and the proliferation of branded commodities of everyday use may not have been as widespread or developed in the Urdu middle-class milieu as they were to become later on, but the other side of Baudrillard's argument – the continuing existence of a strong socio-political power grid expressed as a system of sign-objects – was particularly visible and well-established. This is well known to anthropologists or sociologists dealing with the question of caste, for instance. They have observed, that a mere increase in affluence or cultural sophistication often does very little to change caste hierarchies, it simply shifts or displaces them. When lower caste people begin to use Sanskritic norms in their religious observance – the erstwhile prerogative of the high castes – the latter switch to a secular identity and English to maintain an essential difference.[21] What really matters is how socio-political power influences the relative position of sign-objects within a total system of sign-objects, not the nature of individual objects or cultural goods itself. Baudrillard can help us to think further by pointing out that the emergence of consumer culture simultaneously fortified *and* undermined pre-existing systems of symbolic communication. Its emergence did represent a change in the material culture of middle-class Indians, even though its impact was much more complex and contradictory than the ideology of consumption itself would permit.

Baudrillard's key insight, then, is that a consumer society represents a system of communication. Its hallmark is not so much the proliferation of goods, but the

proliferation of signs. Social analysis has to deal with the question of how commodities are constituted as sign-objects and to what extent they relate to each other in a wider societal language that is employed to express hierarchy and difference. This is why advertising – rather than, for instance, aggregate statistics about goods consumed, or an analysis of household expenditure – emerges as a pivotal field of research. Such a focus will inevitably disappoint some sociologists of consumption who are very sceptical about the kind of structuralist semiotics that a focus on advertising entails. What ought to be studied according to such critics is not advertising itself, but the actual use or exchange of material goods.[22] In the final instance, such criticism constitutes a deep disagreement about fundamental theoretical issues that cannot be resolved through argument. The degree to which human beings are the subjects of structures, or to what extent they can exercise agency over them, can only be theoretically asserted but never be proven one way or the other. It is perhaps more to the point to note a more immediate and practical problem with the kind of agency-oriented micro-sociology advocated by certain sociologists: the historian has only very limited access to the kind of sources they would require; one cannot, after all, conduct consumer surveys or anthropological field studies in retrospect. Some evidence about how people actually reacted to advertising and how they consumed goods can be gained from literature, interviews and other circumstantial sources, and I have used them as far as possible, but the overall thrust of the argument remains determined by the superior availability and accessibility of advertising discourse itself.

## The landscape of Urdu advertising

A statistical survey of the products advertised in *Weekly Tej* between March and August 1935 offers an excellent entry point to the world of Urdu middle-class consumer culture. The selection of this particular publication was in the first instance guided by the availability of a well-preserved and complete sample that could be subjected to quantitative analysis.[23] But there can be no doubt that *Weekly Tej* was a representative print advertising medium of its time. It was the 40-pages strong weekend edition of *Daily Tej*, a nationalist paper founded by the *Arya Samaj* leader Lala Munshiram 'Swami Shraddhanand' in the early 1920s. This placed it right at the heart of an emerging North West Indian Hindu nationalist consciousness. The weekly aspired to be 'the sun of Indian journalism' that would be admired by locals and foreigners alike.[24] A particularly lavish special issue using multi-colour print – the 'Krishna Number' of 21 August 1935 – was endorsed by UP landowning grandees like Sir Ahmad Sa$^{c}$id Khan the Nawab of Chattari, Henry Ford the American car manufacturer, Harold Laski of the London School of Economics, the nationalist leaders M.K. Gandhi and S.C. Bose as well as leading journalists from the established English language papers *The Tribune* and *The Hindustan Times*.[25] The paper cost 2 annas per issue and Rs. 6 for an annual subscription (or Rs. 12 in conjunction with *Daily Tej*); this was reasonably expensive, but still within reach of the middle-class milieu.

*Table 2* Products advertized in *Weekly Tej*, March–August 1935

| *Product class* | *Significant sub-category* | *No.* | *No.* | *%* |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Medical | | | 247 | 29.5 |
| | Zenana and Mardana[a] | 72 | | |
| | Birth-control | 9 | | |
| Financial | | | | 113 |
| Toiletries and cosmetics | | 13.5 | 101 | 12.1 |
| | Soap | 43 | | |
| | Hair products | 20 | | |
| Entertainment | | | 76 | 9.1 |
| | Film[b] | 44 | | |
| | Gramophones and records | 23 | | |
| Clothes and textiles | | | 66 | 7.9 |
| | Hoisery | 33 | | |
| Foodstuffs | | | 51 | 6.1 |
| | Tea | 29 | | |
| Books | | | 43 | 5.1 |
| | Self-help and business advice | 19 | | |
| | Sex and pornography | 10 | | |
| Luxury | | | 19 | 2.3 |
| | Cars | 6 | | |
| | Watches | 2 | | |
| Cigarettes | | | 9 | 1.1 |
| Other | | | 111 | 13.3 |
| Total | | | 836 | |

*Notes*

a Counting products dealing with 'weakness' in an explicitly gendered way; excluding generic strength-giving products.

b Excluding review articles and product placements in the 'filmistan' section.

An overview over the classification of all products advertised in *Weekly Tej* in spring and summer 1935 is provided in Table 2, supplemented by important or interesting sub-categories. By far, the largest general category was medical advertising (about one-third of the total), followed by financial services, toiletries and cosmetics, entertainment, clothes and textiles, foodstuffs and others. The figures shown represent absolute numbers of items without any regard for the size or sophistication of the adverts involved. A more life-like impression is provided in Table 3. It lists the top companies and brands that a contemporary reader of *Weekly Tej* would have noticed and remembered. The ranking is based on a combination of frequency and size of advert. The product at the top of the list – Hindustani Chai – was indeed associated with one of the most sophisticated campaigns of the time period.

How representative for the wider world of Urdu print advertising was the sample from *Weekly Tej?* A comparison with other papers such as *Riyasat, Zamindar, Inqilab, Paisa Akhbar, Chatan, Imroze* – all read over longer time periods with qualitative rather than quantitative analysis in mind – reveals many

*Table 3* Ranking of top brands or companies advertized in *Weekly Tej*, March–August 1935

| *Brand or company in order of prominence*[a] | *No.* | *Size*[b] |
|---|---|---|
| Hindustani Chai (tea) | 16 | 1 |
| Bara Dava Khana (*Yunani* medical) | 21 | 0.5 |
| Sukh Sancharak (*Ayurvedic* medical) | 14 | 0.75 |
| Hindustani Dava Khana (*Yunani* medical) | 10 | 0.75 |
| Jagilal Kamalapat Mills (textiles) | 14 | 0.5 |
| Tomco 501 (soap) | 13 | 0.3 |
| Godrej (soap) | 19 | 0.2 |
| Hifazati Vault (bank deposit) | 18 | 0.2 |
| Misra Hoisery (textile) | 10 | 0.3 |
| Birla (textile) | 9 | 0.3 |
| Amrit Dhara (*Ayurvedic* medical) | 10 | 0.2 |
| Hamdard (*Yunani* medical) | 10 | 0.2 |
| Elias (tea) | 11 | 0.15 |

*Notes*
a Ranking is based on a multiplication of frequency of occurrence (no.) and space expenditure (size).
b Size of most common advertisement as fraction of full page.

commonalities and some differences. In terms of classes of products there is broad similarity, with the possible exception of financial products and services that were much more prominent in *Weekly Tej* than in the loyalist and Muslim nationalist press. This highlights the greater interest in commerce amongst the Hindu segment of the Urdu-using middle classes who constituted the key readership of the weekly. Another difference stemmed from the fact that *Tej* was an overtly nationalist paper that must have appeared suspect to advertising patrons with strong imperial connections. In consequence a number of international brands clearly in evidence elsewhere were absent from the sample: for instance Gillette shaving kits, Lux Toilet Soap, Lifebuoy Soap and Sunlight Soap in the field of toiletries; Lipton Tea, Quaker Oats, McVitie's digestives, Ovaltine, Horlicks, Glaxo Sunshine and Allenbury's Baby Foods amongst novelty foods; Will's Scissors and Odden's Guinea Gold cigarettes and, finally, products by the multi-national giants Kodak, Siemens, Wakefield Castrol, Chevrolet and Dunlop Tyres. It is important to note the presence of these global brand names in the Urdu press because they indicate that international consumer goods companies had taken an interest in the Indian market and introduced advertising techniques that were every bit as sophisticated as their counterparts back in the rich world.

The availability of advanced consumer brands did not necessarily mean that advertising was a particularly widespread or economically important practice in late colonial India, however. It is striking that certain important items of everyday consumption hardly featured at all in the pages of daily or weekly newspapers. Advertisements for foodstuffs, for instance, were confined to novelty foods such as tea, breakfast cereals or hot energy drinks. Ordinary items such as flour, rice and fresh produce were not normally within the purview of print advertising.

Much the same can be said about garments. Although there were occasional references to Van Heusen shirts and Flex Shoes in the English language press, most people still seemed to have bought cloth and had it stitched to their own specification by a local tailor who remained invisible to the press. Furniture and other items of interior decoration did occasionally appear, but not to a major extent. In short, the product landscape of Urdu advertising had not yet become synonymous with the product landscape of everyday life.

A further indicator of the uneven nature of advertising culture in the time period under view was the overwhelming prominence of medical products that deserves to be examined in greater detail. A handful of large Indian drug manufacturers accounted for many of the medical commodities advertised in *Weekly Tej* (see Table 2).

Particularly prominent were two Delhi-based *Yunani* companies, the Hindustani Dava Khana of the Congress activist and medical practitioner Hakim Ajmal Khan and the Bara Dava Khana of Hakim Muhammad Ahmad Khan. The most frequent and prominent *Ayurvedic* advertiser was Sukh Sancharak Singh, an enterprise located in Mathura, UP. The company was indeed such a good patron of *Weekly Tej* that it received recognition in a feature article as 'one of the most successful factories of India'.[26] Less prominent, but of regular frequency were advertisements for the Lahore *Ayurvedic* company Amrit Dhara ('Stream of the Nectar of Life'); then there were the well-known *Yunani* medical trust Hamdard (still in existence today), the Bengal-based Kamala Works and a range of others. The most commonly advertised Western medical brands were 'blood cleansing' products such as 'Cystex' ('makes you ten years younger') and 'Clarke's Blood Mixture'; also worth mentioning are 'Patentex' (a contraceptive), the self-explanatory drug 'Gonokiller', and 'Okasa', a German-made potency drug for both men and women.

The great prominence of medical advertising was a common and longstanding feature of print advertising in Urdu. The Lahore dailies *Zamindar* and *Inqilab* contained a comparable amount of advertisements for all sorts of health-giving preparations. In many cases they were the same products also on display in *Weekly Tej*.[27] In the case of magazine publications with less advertising space overall – for instance the monthly religious journal *Maulvi* or the Congress weekly *Hindustan* – the proportion of medical advertising could be even higher than in newspapers. It is interesting to note that the religious orientation of the *Maulvi* did not entail prudishness. The medical notices in question were almost invariably concerned with matters of reproductive health, impotence cures or anti-gonorrhoea drugs for men, preparations against *safedkorh* or birthcontrol products for women.[28]

There is a straightforward legal reason for the prominence of medical advertising. European-style regulatory regimes that kept most medical remedies out of the market of consumer commodities only began to take effect in South Asia in the early post-colonial era. The most comprehensive piece of legislation in India was the 1954 Drugs and Magic Remedies Act that included a lengthy list of diseases that were no longer to be mentioned in advertising; they included all the

favourite complaints of the interwar era.[29] In consequence to this and similar endeavours at provincial level, the overall share of medical products in total advertising space declined to 20 per cent and less.[30]

The proliferation of medical advertising during most of the time period under review can also be seen as a development indicator of the economic importance of advertising as a whole. The pre-eminence of all kinds of drugs and remedies had been a hallmark of the first expansion of print advertising in eighteenth and nineteenth-century Europe.[31] This was the result of simple economic logic. At a time when mass advertising was not widely regarded as a business necessity, only particularly far-sighted entrepreneurs or conmen on the boundaries of legality saw a need to utilize the ability to appeal directly to newspaper readers. This included a significant number of often self-made medical men – for instance, the famous advertising pioneer Thomas Holloway who made his fortune out of his globally marketed pills and tonics in the 1860s.[32]

Advertising economics in India remained similarly precarious during the time period under review. A rate list for *Weekly Tej* is indicative of the wider state of affairs. A quarter-page-by-two-columns advertisement in the weekly 'Sales Depot' section (usually one prominently placed page at the beginning of the newspaper) was Rs 8 per issue; a small notice went for Rs 2. This means that the total advertising revenues per issue could not have been much more than a few hundred rupees in total. Although the cost of placing an advertisement was relatively small – definitely within easy reach of any large company and still affordable for moderately well-off local artisans and shops – there were frequent blank spaces in the Sales Depot section of *Weekly Tej*. This reinforces the conclusion drawn from the uneven spread of products; only a few select businesses deemed it necessary or profitable to bother with using this form of marketing at all. Things had not improved much by the end of the time period. The 1952 Indian Press Commission found that most vernacular papers did not dedicate more than 30 per cent of their total print space to advertisements, while the most commercialized English language paper – the Calcutta *Statesman* – reached more than 40 per cent. In the case of the Hindi dailies *Milap* and *Pratap* – both used to have high-circulation Urdu editions in Lahore and Delhi before Partition – the ratio was closer to 20 per cent.[33] In consequence, most vernacular language publication with a circulation figure between 5,000 and 35,000 copies derived only between 35 and 45 per cent of their income from advertising, as compared to 60 per cent for mass circulation dailies in English.[34]

Advertising as a professional pursuit was only slowly taking hold in India. Up to the turn of the nineteenth century, sales promotions were seen as a marginal pursuit and commonly designed by newspaper scribes. The first professional advertising agencies – often branches of metropolitan firms – appeared in the big commercial cities of Bombay and Calcutta towards the end of the first decade of the twentieth century; but their activities remained largely confined to the English language press. Most of them were offshoots of large American or British firms such as J. Walter Thompson, which was also reflected in their output – mainly

copy in English, or if vernacular languages were used, then only simple translations of metropolitan campaigns. A real proliferation of professional advertising and its appearance in vernacular publishing did not take place before the mid-1920s. The first 'fully fledged' agency was the National Advertising Agency founded in 1931, followed by numerous others that organized as a professional umbrella body – the Advertising Agencies Association – in 1945.[35] The installation of the Nehruvian state after Partition led again to a relative decline in advanced marketing techniques. At the Indian Advertising Convention of 1960, many delegates still saw a need to make 'the case for advertising'. One speaker noted bluntly that 'a considerable section of opinion in India treats advertising with reserve and even hostility.' The Prime Minister himself was quoted as describing 'advertising as a mill-stone round the neck of the product'; and with that 'nothing puts him off a product as much as its advertising.'[36]

The period between 1930 and 1947 had been more open to experiments with advertising than the era of Nehruvian socialism. It is interesting to note that a significant amount of advertisements were in fact advertisements for advertising itself. The publishers of *Weekly Tej* were repeatedly exhorting prospective patrons to come forward. 'Advertise during the summer months when your sales go down!' ran one headline,[37] another pertained to address the end consumer directly, but was really speaking to business: 'Always buy goods that you see in advertisements – because generally speaking what is advertised also turns out to be good!'[38]. Others attempted to turn the wisdom of 'scientific advertising' itself into a commodity. A self-help book with the same title by one Prof. B.N. Gupta promised an easy introduction to the latest theories in advertising, utilizing the latest 'psychological' methods employed in the United States, Europe and Japan. Testimonials in favour of his application came, amongst others, from Dr Satyapal, a well-known Congress leader and member of the Hindu mercantile upper class of Lahore.[39] Similar advertisements for advertising agencies also appeared in *Riyasat* and two decades later in the Pakistani weekly *Chatan*.[40]

Print-advertising was certainly the most important and easily accessible advertising medium, but by no means the only one. One alternative that has largely vanished from the historical record were posters and billboards. Some evidence suggests that it was still very difficult to conduct large coordinated campaigns with the help of hoardings in the 1960s because local painters and craftsmen could not yet be relied upon to replicate centrally approved designs in every detail. An additional problem was that billboards often did not survive the monsoon season and had to be renewed more often than economically feasible.[41] More promising was the medium of film advertising, which began to take hold in the middle of the 1930s, but still lagged far behind print-advertising in terms of expenditure in 1960.[42] Pren Nevile remembers the first film-advertised product he saw as a young boy; it was for the much-maligned vegetable ghee product Dalda Banaspati.[43] For a more colourful take on the perceived possibilities of early film advertising one could dip into the oeuvre of the Lahore-based comedian and social satirist 'Haji Laqlaq'. He worked for several daily newspapers as well

as All India Radio and later composed propaganda material for the 'Pakistan' campaign.[44] One of Laqlaq's satirical stories from the late colonial period was entitled 'Three Dreams'. The first episode was about a case of sensory displacement that anticipated some of the stylistic techniques of magic realism. After a long conversation with a neighbour about the new possibilities of film and a heavy meal afterwards, the narrator falls suddenly asleep. In his dream he finds himself in a cinema hall that is about to show the first film that does not only communicate sound and vision, but also smell. After carefully cleaning his nose so 'the film smell could reach my noble brain without distortion' the curtain opens for the advertisements:

> A perfume shop came into view and the smell of all kinds of fragrant substances began to rise in the theatre – the smell of flower extract, sesame oil, tamarind and spice. 'For the best and cheapest perfumes and aromatic oils please come to the shop of our Muslim brother in Kashmiri Bazaar!' After this the picture of a fruit shop appeared. The smell of apples hit my brain, then the fragrance of oranges made my mouth water. And when the scent of some very special mangoes began to crowd out the other smells, I saw that [one] Salik Saheb left with the words 'I am going to Chiragh ud-Din's shop.'[45]

The point about this description is not so much the selection of products – it is unlikely that local perfume and fruit sellers had the money to advertise in cinemas at the time – but the suggestive possibilities of film as an advertising medium. The depiction of commodities in film was experienced with such intensity and reality effect that it could evoke immediate reactions in the audience. The story continued with a description of the olfactory sensations brought about by the main feature film. The underlying theme of Laqlaq's vignette was the connection between appearances and underlying emotions. Right at the end, the narrator is woken up by the overpowering smell of farts – his own as it turns out – but they appear in the dream just at the moment when the narrator realizes that he had to share the cinema hall with members of the Hindu middle class. This and not an invisible action by one of the heroes on screen was the real origin of discomfort. Looking back to the earlier description of advertising, it appears that the wonderful smell of perfume and fruit could reach Haji Laqlaq's brain unhindered only because they were associated with Muslim shops. This captured an insight about the working of advertising discourse that transcended the styles and techniques used in advertising. Material goods could become socially meaningful because they carried markers of identity – in this case a communal one – that were entirely unconnected to the goods as such.

## Make love like a nawab – drink tea like a peasant

The ideological function of advertising lies in the ability to harness the process of social communication for the generation of unlimited growth. Capitalist mass

production theoretically suffers from the problem that its commodities are too widespread and too uniform to serve as markers of social identity in the same way as artisan and crafts products once could. Richard Sennett illustrates this point nicely in *The Fall of Public Man* by juxtaposing the colourful and individually made costumes of *ancien regime* court culture with the greys and blacks of factory-made suits.[46] Capitalist commodities may possess use and exchange value – to use Marxian terminology – but they cannot easily appeal to people's desires to communicate social roles to each other. The deficit is compensated for by branding, a practice that re-attaches to otherwise under-descript goods a sense of artificial identity. This was already well understood by a trade insider like H.H.G. Moorhouse, cartoonist for the Indian wing of J. Walter Thompson. 'The primary object of any advertisement is the communication of ideas' he explained. After all, 'in advertising, as we all know, we do not sell products or goods as such but the services and benefits those products and goods bestow on the user'. The secret of advertising was the ability 'to give the product and advertising a personality', as 'it is the product personality which [the advertiser] places in the consumer's mind which obtains [an] emotional reaction and not just the virtues of the product alone'. All this, Moorhouse believed, would have a larger sociological impact: 'advertisements are a powerful factor in forming a pattern of life (…), or formulating standards of taste and appreciation, and in spreading culture'.[47]

Leaving aside the self-congratulatory optimism, this was essentially how Baudrillard understood the working of consumption as a social form. In an advanced consumer society even the most innocuous and self-explanatory item – say a tomato – has become 'personalized'. This results from a systemic strategy of inundating the consumer with choice. Whether one likes it or not, one has to pick from 'cherry tomatoes', 'vine-ripened tomatoes', 'organic tomatoes' and so on; and even the refusal to play ball and to simply buy 'tomatoes unspecified' from a market stall, becomes part of an assertion of identity. The selection of one particular type of tomato is not really guided by its suitability for kitchen use – in the last instance there is not really much difference between them – but by an often unconscious connection between social aspiration and the kind of 'personality' that distinguishes one tomato from another. By forcing consumers to make hundreds if not thousands of similar choices with every acquisition of goods or services, the consumption of goods constitutes a language of social communication that defines who we are.

To what extent does all this have any relevance for identity construction in the Urdu middle-class milieu of the late colonial period? Let us go through the argument step-by-step. In the first instance, it needs to be asked to what extent advertising provided the kind of proliferation of sign objects that could entangle people in a web of choice. It is obvious that the net of product personalization was never as extensive during the time period under review as it was to become in more advanced consumer societies after the Second World War. There were no vine-ripened tomatoes in interwar India. As far as most items of daily need were concerned, choice was still either entirely determined by use and exchange value

or by 'traditional' systems of signification such as loyalty to a particular shop with whom a family had an acquaintance. When Sufi Pir Baksh's grandson cycled all the way from Mominpura to the dry-good bazaars of Delhi Gate, Lahore, in order to purchase flour, rice and *dal*, he did not behave as a consumer in Baudrillard's sense.

The best indicator for the power of consumption as a social form is the branding of individual *products*. Historically, advertising had begun with trade notices about what type of product was available at what shop and for what price. These notices sometimes tried to attract customers by personalizing the stockist or retailer – it was an 'exclusive' shop, a 'value-for-money' shop, a shop 'by appointment of the Vice-regal Lodge'.[48] But it is only when branding and advertising begin to draw up a distinct personality for each and every item sold in a shops that sign objects are available in sufficient numbers and density to constitute something like an autonomous social language. There are clear indications that the importance of branding had become widely recognized by the interwar period in India at least in certain business sectors. Amongst the services that local advertising agencies offered was the registration and protection of brand names.[49] In some cases the term 'brand' or 'marka' was deliberately incorporated into product names; for instance in the case of Tala Marka locks; or uncharacteristically advanced for its sector, in Lal Imli ('Red Tamarind') Brand cloth, produced in the Cawnpore Woollen Mills.[50] In other sectors of the commodity market, branding had become routine, such as in medical remedies, soap, tea, hot energy drinks and cigarettes. Let us examine some of them in more detail.

Product branding was well advanced in medical advertising. Hamdard, for instance, promoted one of its many preparations each week and gave the individual product brand a more prominent place in the advertisement than the overall firm name.[51] Other large medical companies – Bara Dawakhana, Hindustani Dawakhana, Sukh Sancharak Singh or Amrit Dhara – usually highlighted the firm's name or founder figure in their advertisements; but they also took care to give medical names to individual products. The process of consumption in Baudrillard's sense swung into action when consumers were invited to choose between products with essentially identical use value on the grounds of personality preference. In the first instance this was a choice between products from a single supplier. It was commonplace for medical entrepreneurs to advertise three distinctly identified branded drugs side-by-side. One would be specifically aimed at men, one at women and one at children. Despite this identification of specific groups of users, the main medical indication of the three types of tonics or pills was essentially the same. They all promised to deal with generalized weakness (*kamzuri*) which was – according to age or gender – linked to impotence, *safed korh*, skin disease, feeling under the weather, digestive troubles, headaches, clouding of the mind and dementia, 'hysteria', rheumatism and a range of other complaints. A connection between these disparate conditions was provided by medical discourses that – as already pointed out in an earlier chapter – saw all of the aforementioned ailments as the result of humoural imbalance. Many products

concentrated specifically on impurity of the blood, a conception originating in *Yunani Tibb* that had spread to *Ayurveda* and even Western preparations. It is striking that most European products advertised in the Urdu press did not differ much from the standard Indian aetiology. Many promised to cleanse the blood – Cystex, Clarke's, Wincome's and Fanon Salt – while others operated with humour-related, liver-centred aetiologies – Carter's Little Pills and Andrews Liver Salts.

All these products were designed for self-medication. The whole reason for advertising drugs and remedies in the press was the possibility to use mail-order services to reach customers far beyond the physical location where the pharmaceutical workshop was located and to by-pass the recommendation of medical practitioners who often tried to make money out of prescribing and selling their own preparations. This left the choice of any specific drug to the end consumer. Since the general indication of most medical products was next to identical, this choice depended on how the recipient of an advertisement connected to the product personality. This had little to do with any existing medical condition and all with identity, in the first instance with gender, but then also with religious background – for instance in the not always straightforward choice between an *Ayurvedic* or a *Yunani* preparation – as well as with worldviews and political aspirations. There was the belief in scientific progress against traditional wisdom, for instance, or in the superiority of foreign origin against the authenticity of something *swadeshi*.

In order to illustrate this choice between product personalities, let us compare two common advertisements for drugs against male (and female) 'weakness'. The first is a German product called 'Okasa' developed by one 'Professor Hausen' ('Lahuzn' or 'Huzn' in Urdu characters) which appeared in *Inqilab*, *Zamindar* and *Weekly Tej* in various advertisements in the mid-to late 1930s.[52] The Okasa brand must have been widespread and recognizable. It still exists today, both in its native Germany and in India. Following the basic logic of product diversification, Okasa was offered in two versions – one for men called 'Okasa Silver' and another one for women called 'Okasa Gold'. The advertisements were always eye catching, illustrated either by the picture of a body builder symbolizing physical strength, or by medical diagrams explaining the way in which the product was supposed to work. The main selling point were Prof. Hausen's great achievements in research and his success in international medical fairs, all described in hyperbolic language and on one occasion supplemented by a picture of the man himself. Uncommon for medical products at the time, the efficacy of the product was explained with reference to the activity of glands and hormones, not in terms of humoural medicine. Certain cross references to established medical common sense were provided by pointing to the impact of glandular activity on blood circulation and urinary processes. Okasa adverts often ended in the customary assurance that the drug would work for all human beings, regardless of the climate they lived in.

The second product bore the name al-Hayat – one of the Arabic terms for life, complete with the article 'al-' which has often been affixed to all sorts of terms by South Asian Muslims to indicate a close connection with the Islamic tradition. It appeared a few months after Okasa in *Zamindar*.[53] In the opening line of

the advertisement, the author swears by God Almighty that this product was extraordinary. He proceeds with a reference to the importance of Lucknow – from where the drug was marketed – as capital of traditional *Yunani Tibb*. Then the active ingredient is identified as 'electric (or electrifying) gold' (barqi tila), the metaphorical name for a substance discovered under the reign of Wajid Alishah. According to the text, the efficacy of the preparation has been recognized, not only by other Yunani practitioners, but also western doctors. Wealthy people are reported to be prepared to pay large amounts of money to obtain the drug. Subsequently, more praise is heaped on the product by the editor of the local *Railway Magazine* and a Sikh Doctor with an impressive Western medical pedigree, who alleges that 'electric gold' would have to be considered cheap even if it were sold for a thousand rupees.

The first advert relies on the belief in Western scientific superiority; the reader is expected to buy Okasa in preference to some other drug like al-Hayat with the assumption that it works better. The strategy to impress the reader is twofold: on the one hand the magic of exoticism – the enigmatic picture and scientific diagrams of a German 'professor', on the other hand the creation of an intellectual relationship with the reader by offering a causal explanation for how Okasa works. The second advert tries to convince the more 'traditionally' inclined customer that indigenous medical wisdom can produce results which stand up to the scrutiny of Western science. Tradition has strong 'feudal' overtones here. As was the case with many sex and masculinity-related products – think of the *Kokshastra* 'of Emperors' – male prowess was seen as the prerogative of the nobility of old who had a humongous sexual appetite fuelled by 'rich' foods. The reference to Lucknow and Wajid Alishah in the aforementioned example tried to evoke exactly such associations of past decadence. A rational explanation for how the product works is eschewed in favour of appeals to elite consensus; some respected people say it works, although they cannot quite explain why. It was very common for advertisers of *Yunani Tibb* to present a list of satisfied customers, preferably of high social status, sometimes filling an entire newspaper page. Okasa and al-Hayat developed two identity modules, the fetishism of Western technology and the nostalgia for indigenous feudal grandeur. There are suggestions that this was exactly how people related to personality differences in potency drugs. According to Pren Nevile, Unionist politicians in 1940s Punjab tended to chose drugs with a 'feudal' resonance, while Hindu upper-middle-class circles preferred Okasa due to its 'scientific' and hence enlightened appeal.[54] This observation was based on anecdotal evidence and appears almost too neat to be true – there is, after all, no guarantee that 'traditional' people always chose a 'traditional' product or 'modern' people always a 'scientific' one. But it matters that Nevile immediately recognized the principle that the choice of commodities was guided by the desire to communicate social identities.

The semiotic grid of product personalities was often much more complex than simple binary choices. Nothing illustrates this better than the great tea advertising campaigns of the 1930s. By the late 1930s, the brand Lipton had established a

strong presence in the pages of the major Urdu dailies. Brief but highly distinctive, its advertisements bore the clear imprint of international marketing expertise. The slogans were short and changed frequently: 'khalis aur sasta' ('special and cheap'), 'White label – aql intikhab karti hai' ('the brain decides') and 'ap bhi vo cha'e pi sakte henjo shahzade pite hen ('you too can enjoy the tea consumed by princes').[55] Every caption was combined with the picture of a satisfied customer, which showed Lipton's awareness of gender and religious differences. Men were shown with full beards, wearing Indian dress and a turban tied in the way preferred by Muslims; women were depicted as covering their heads with the end of their saris and *without* the forehead ornament (*bindi*) customary for Hindu women. The *Zamindar*, in which these adverts appeared, was a newspaper mainly read by Muslims, hence the types depicted were also recognizably Muslim. The advert featuring a woman appealed to social envy – the reference to princes – while male readers found an appeal to their cerebral abilities. The Western brand name Lipton itself stood in marked contrast to the entirely indigenous image of the happy tea drinkers, as if the two needed to counterbalance each other. Overall, the flavour was indigenous–conventional but with an upwardly mobile tinge. Lipton tried to be special, the sign of taste and refinement, but at the same time easily accessible to a social stratum which had – for whatever reason – not opted for the appropriation of Western luxuries as a marker of class.

Different combinations of identity modules – each carefully tailored to the target readership of the respective advertising medium – were proposed by the other big tea company with a high advertising profile, Hindustani Chai. In the Muslim paper *Zamindar* the indigenous name of the product was associated with modernizing middle-class aspirations. One illustration featured a man in Western dress being served tea by a servant – a clear reference to colonial-style affluence.[56] On another occasion a new form of middle-class domesticity was suggested to the consumer. An eye-catching picture showed a happy family with two sons; one was dressed in western style shorts, the prerogative of modern schooling and by implication indicative of aspirations for a later career in the professional sector; the other son was sporting a more conventional *kurta pajama* signalling that the preservation of indigenous authenticity was by no means precluded. The happy housewife in the middle of the picture is addressed directly by the advert. Drinking tea together (presumably around the dining room table) is suggested as the best way to bring about happiness in the family.[57] The Hindustani Chai campaign in *Weekly Tej* – a Hindu nationalist paper – played on different identity registers. Unlike in *Zamindar*, the theme was not the middle-class family, but the authenticity of Hindustani Chai as a truly Indian product. It was shown to be drunk by building workers on a scaffolding made of bamboo, by peasants resting in the shade of a tree while looking over a riverine landscape below, by a village community sporting all kinds of indigenous clothes and headgear. The captions constantly reminded the reader that Hindustani Chai was 'a drink born in India',[58] a product 'from India's soil'[59] made by 'Indian workers'[60] and hence the 'true friend of the Indian people'.[61] It is immediately obvious that the pictures of happy

tea-drinking proletarians were not simply aimed at making labouring people drink more tea, although this is not to be ruled out as a secondary objective. The point was to portray an item of daily consumption that was closely associated with 'modern' and hence colonized lifestyles acceptable to a nationalist middle class that was quite happy to adopt consumer novelties as long as their appropriation could be portrayed as a patriotic return to *swadeshi* authenticity.

Customary cultural practices were by no means challenged by the presence of advertising, but were often utilized to appeal to prospective consumers. The beginning of the Muslim month of fasting was considered an ideal time to advertise clocks and watches, for instance. The imagery was naturally saturated with religious references. A notice placed by the 'American Watch Company'[62] – in itself a consciously westernising brand creation – addressed itself explicitly to all fast-abiding believers. The advertisement asserted that 'it is impossible to be punctual without a watch'. True believers, the copy went on, needed to be punctual because punctuality was the spirit behind the worship of God (ʿibadat ki ruh) and would earn the believer God's pleasure. It followed a lengthy description of the meaning of Ramadan and the importance to begin and end one's fast on time. Any good Muslim is required to have a clock or watch in his house and in recognition of this religious necessity, the company offered a 50 per cent discount for all those who kept their daily fast. This construction of a religious use value for a product of moderate luxury was, of course, in reality highly questionable; the end and beginning of the fasting period each day is announced by a gun shot and the mosque's call to prayer; it would be an affront against the communitarian aspect of Islam to insist on one's own watch reading in this regard.

Despite being less extensive than the web of product personalization in more developed consumer societies, Urdu print advertising was sophisticated enough to produce a reasonable variety of sign objects. Several different social identities could be assembled with the help of product choices. Consumer sign objects could underwrite the aspiration to be as authentic as the Indian peasantry or as refined as the world of princes. One could express a belief in the superiority of something 'made in Germany' or maintain that various varieties of 'made in India' were still more satisfying. Most importantly, advertising identities transcended surface dichotomies like that between 'tradition' and 'modernity', not to speak of false oppositions such as 'consumerism' versus 'religious purity'. It would be nonsense to argue that consumption as a new form of social communication only touched or appealed to the 'Westernized' elite. This may have been the case in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries when Anglo-Indian cultural norms predominated and almost all of the products on display were luxury goods. By the interwar period – when vernacular advertising really began to take off – the world of consumer goods had become much more ordinary, and no doubt firmly incorporated into lower-middle-class life. But to what extent did this new grid of sign objects actually constitute a 'consumer society' in Baudrillard's sense? As the next section of this chapter will demonstrate, there were some significant peculiarities about the world of Urdu consumer identities that force us

to reconsider the overall role and status of consumption in the wider social context.

## A cult of use value

A close look at the way in which consumer goods were advertised in the Urdu press reveals a dominant subtext that remained remarkably constant despite all the variety encountered at the level of alternative 'personalizations'. Returning to the Hindustani Chai campaign in both *Weekly Tej* and *Zamindar*, for instance, there was not only an invitation to construct certain social identities with the help of the purchase of tea, but also an additional line of persuasion. There was the construction of a *surrogate use value* for a product that was new and hence had no obvious use value. Tea was described as a form of health food. It bestowed 'freshness' (tar-o-tazigi), 'strength' (tawana'i) and 'vigour' (quwwat). Tea kept sleep away and therefore facilitated hard work; it also helped to balance the impact of the seasons on the body: it warmed in winter and cooled in summer.[63] This approximated tea to a large range of other consumer goods with similar medical indications that invariably focused on the middle-class complaint par excellence – generalized weakness and lack of energy. There are only hints that the consumption of tea was about pleasure or comfort. People were led to believe that drinking tea was not a wasted expenditure, but part of a process of self-fashioning. Many Hindustani Chai adverts featured lengthy and detailed descriptions of how to prepare tea – 'boil some clean water…' – and when to drink it – with breakfast, at 11 o'clock, with lunch and with dinner.[64] In the first instance, tea was part and parcel of the cardinal virtues of middle-class life, hygiene and good time management. But the presence of explicit instructions also played upon something else – the middle-class ideal of being able to acquire useful skills through self-education.

A similar strategy was at work in a number of other advertisements trying to convince the public of the benefits of certain novelty foods or medical preparations. 'Start the day on a sound basis' – proclaimed an advertisement for Quaker Oats and suggested that the ingestion of this breakfast cereal could maintain 'energy' (transliterated into Urdu) for up to five hours, by which time '70 per cent of daily work' would be completed.[65] Another advert for the same product showed a happy boy full of vigour and about to run off to school.[66] The acquisition of a food item that Indians had done without for centuries was not only a sign of buying into a global consumer identity; it could be justified on the grounds that it helped people *earn* a better place in society. In the medical field, Andrew's Liver Salts was not only a substance to remove impurities from the blood, but it also promised – with the help of a delightful illustration – to turn the middle-class youngster from a lazy brat into a BA student topping his class.[67] An even more colourful and revealing connection between a duty-driven middle-class identity and the acquisition of a not at all useful novelty food was provided by Horlick's Hot Energy Drink. It consisted of little cartoon stories illustrating the effects of

a strength-giving product that was tailor made to correspond to precisely the kind of ill-defined weakness and listlessness that was definitive of middle-class corporeality. One version was specifically targeted at the middle-class housewife.[68] The title was 'Harmony has been restored to family life' and the ensuing story ran as follows: A mother-in-law complains to her son that Atiya, his wife and the woman of the house had failed her duties. When the Collector's wife came round the other day, the house and Atiya herself looked so untidy, that the mother fears for the social reputation (ʿizzat) of her son. Matters get worse for the housewife; a letter arrives from the headmaster informing the family that their children have been unpunctual at school. Again the blame is heaped on the poor woman, who does not find any other excuse but that she is feeling weak and tired all the time. The husband consults a doctor who suggests the woman take a glass of Horlicks hot energy drink on regular occasions. She follows the prescription, recovers and manages to perform all her household duties with valour. In the end the mother-in-law proclaims in front of the neat and tidy children and a proud husband that she has come to love her daughter-in-law almost as much as her own daughter. There was also a 'male' version involving a clerk and describing the same miraculous problem-solving properties of Horlicks under the heading 'I nearly missed my promotion'.[69]

This was a general feature of interwar advertising in India. Only a few products – gramophone records or film, for instance – were mostly about providing enjoyment. Advertising commonly invoked a language of need that provided a fig leaf of necessity even to the most obviously pleasure-oriented products. The reading of Urdu adaptations of Sherlock Holmes stories was portrayed as a *useful* activity because it may give young men the knowledge they needed to get recruited into the colonial police force.[70] Pornography – 'to be read in the total loneliness of the night' – also offered advice that would lead to the moral and medical betterment of marital relations. The use of Perfect Toilet Soap was endorsed by one of 'India's beautiful film actress'; but lest anybody chose to buy it out of vanity, there was a provision that the same soap helped to produce 'freshness of the mind'.[71] Another familiar enough case was the assertion that smoking was not only pleasurable, but also 'good for health'.[72] On one occasion even electrical lamps were dragged into the orbit of middle-class self-fashioning. Under the deliberately misleading heading 'Meerut College' a stockist drew readers' attention to the fact that the same light that enabled students to study longer and harder in their hostels could also be brought into everybody's home.[73]

What does this emphasis on surrogate use value reveal to social analysis? A brief return to theory may be useful before answering this question. 'Traditional symbolic objects', as Baudrillard called them, did not require the association with a surrogate use value. They could exist as transparent sign objects in their own right. The luxury of old elites, for instance, was often constructed around deliberately useless expenditure because it had no other purpose but to demarcate a social status that did not have to explain itself. Until well into the bourgeois age, luxury had been designated by sign objects connected to leisure, once again

stressing the *lack* of use value as a marker of status.[74] The sign objects of advanced capitalism, in contrast, can no longer appeal to the desire to show status in the same direct and 'conspicuous' way. Although the aspiration to social privilege is by no means absent, it has to be obliquely represented as being useful or hard earned. In Baudrillard's terminology, use value – and in more complex ways also exchange value – is required as an alibi for sign-exchange value.[75] Surrogate use value and exchange value constitute an ideological veneer that maintains the pretence that capitalism is an open system based on nothing but merit and free exchange. The kinds of people who relate to 'useful' products acknowledge the myth that society does not recognize inherent hierarchies. This is particularly the case amongst the social losers of consumer society who somehow realize that the acquisition of status symbols does not necessarily advance their real social status. By way of compensation they often turn the invocation of use value into a ritual or cult. To illustrate this argument, Baudrillard noted that television sets were mostly switched off in elite living rooms, but constantly running in working-class kitchens.[76]

The aforementioned Horlicks cartoon about Atiya the unhappy housewife illustrates perfectly how the connection between sign-exchange value and surrogate use value worked. The drinking of Horlicks could not be directly linked to the aspiration of impressing the collector's wife or of having a successful husband and promising children. This would be openly sanctioning the demarcation of a social identity with the help of a consumer commodity. Of course, buying Horlicks was ultimately about nothing else, but the nature of the game was not to be given away so easily. Upward social mobility had to remain ideologically connected to effort, or middle-class identity would lose its moral centre. The fulfilment of Atiya's aspirations had to be represented as something *earned* rather than merely bought. This is the ideological function of her illness, which is incurred as the result of the heroic defence of middle-class values. The magic of advertising discourse was that it legitimized social aspirations by attaching a pricetag to them, and simultaneously suggested that this price had already been paid. The travails of fictional Atiya cleansed the real middle-class housewife of the sin of showing off with useless expenditure.

Atiya's travails throw fresh light on the interplay between the widespread psychosomatic condition of 'weakness' and reformist discourse that has already been discussed in Chapter 3. Middle-class identity was largely based on demarcating a certain sense of corporeality. The middle-class body emerged only in the constant struggle against indulgence and outside contamination. When seen in conjunction with consumption politics this argument can be taken a good deal further. The very products that were most accessible on the market as sign objects – medicines, toiletries, novelty foods – were also the ones most closely associated with a corporeal use value. Whoever took Maulvi Amin's or Mashriqi's instructions seriously invariably also ended up buying watches, chinaware and tea, not to speak of a lot of soap and toothpaste. The readers of scare stories about the ever-present danger of all forms of physical degeneration, meanwhile, could be

expected to take a special interest in the range of energy drinks, tonics and pills presented by medical entrepreneurs. Disease was only at a superficial level the middle-class body's response to the relentless pressures of social expectations. In actual fact, both aspects of middle-class identity were part and parcel of a larger ideological formation.[77] By claiming that the constant effort of middle-class life caused all sorts of symptomatic weaknesses, middle-class people could silence any suggestion that their social position was not properly earned. The very same sign objects that marked the ability to buy social status could also be presented as medals won in the corporeal struggle. The widespread invocation of disease indicates that the desire to construct aspirant social identities with the help of new sign objects was in constant need of self-justification. Wherever one looked, advertising made products look useful, as if no other way of basic product personalization would ever be appropriate. The matrix of sign objects may have been a language, but it was a language that kept on saying the same thing repeatedly. Consumer culture in the Urdu middle-class milieu possessed a strangely mono-dimensional and unreal quality.

## Miracles of colonial capitalism

What does this cult of use value say about the status and meaning of a consumer society in the Urdu middle-class milieu more generally? The cult of alibi use value cannot be exhaustively analysed with a Baudrillardian critique of consumer ideology. It is necessary to take an additional critical step back which reveals the ideological nature of ideology itself; or as the Marxian literary critic Roberto Schwarz has called it, an 'ideology of the second degree'[78]. The point about this concept is that sometimes people engage ideologies not to hide systemic contradictions in certain modes of production, but to make themselves believe that such modes of production exist in the first place. Schwarz's concrete case was social realism in the Brazilian novel of the nineteenth century. He found that Brazilians did not write Brazilian adaptations of metropolitan literary products because the latter explained the workings of their own society, but because these books allowed them to pretend that Brazil was really as properly capitalist as the metropolitan countries where the realist novel originated.

Transposed to the world of Urdu advertising, a similar argument proposes the following: the cult of use value was not – or at least not primarily so – about making consumption look egalitarian and meritocratic, but about invoking the very possibility of a consumer society itself. There is an immediate parallel between the Brazilian literature Schwarz studied and the world of Indian print advertising: both were at least initially dominated by imported cultural forms that were somehow 'misplaced' in their new context. Particularly in its earliest period, most advertisements in India were either direct translations or at best hasty adaptations of metropolitan models. The aforementioned Horlicks cartoon, for instance, was a recasting – albeit a fairly clever one – of a similar campaign used in Great Britain at the same time. The following pages offer textual evidence that

further demonstrates the real unreality of capitalist ideology in the Urdu middle-class milieu. Some examples will deal with the issue of consumption in a direct manner; others help to place the *raison d'etre* of surrogate use value – the need to ideologically conceal entrenched inequality under capitalism – within proper perspective.

Let us begin with two pieces of literature, both written by middle-class authors and designed to educate two groups of readers that were thought to be particularly in need of edification – young people and women. The first, a children's story entitled 'Purani Haveli' ('The Old Townhouse') was a contribution to a series of children's books called *Paisa Library* and produced by the reformist publisher Dar ul-Ishaᶜat-e-Punjab.[79] Each issue was priced at 7½ annas, which a child could acquire by saving exactly one paisa each day for a month. Following the standards of the time, these books were proclaimed to be of the same educational standard as school books, while the act of diverting money from more short-lived indulgencies such as sweets would constitute an act of education in itself.[80] The story under consideration was included in a volume entitled *Khazanun ki kahanian* ('Stories of Treasures') and written by the playwright and novelist Imtiaz Ali Taj who was also the foremost publisher and producer of Urdu children's literature in mid-twentieth-century Punjab.

The heroes are Hashim and Kazim, two teenage boys who discover a treasure in their old townhouse that helps them save their father, Nazim Beg, from financial ruin. The interesting point about this tale is the often very detailed description of the social background of the family and the circumstances of the father's ruin and miraculous recovery. Nazim Beg is from an old and noble ('*sharif*') family with connections to the Mughal court. Political influence acquired a landholding that was 'not much less in size than a small princely state today' but political insecurity – culminating in the Great Rebellion of 1857 – led to the loss of almost all ancestral possessions. Nazim Beg decided that renting out the townhouses remaining in family ownership had no future. Under the colonial system there were no old notables left who needed to maintain a presence in the city. In consequence, he sold all real estate except the ancestral *haveli* where the treasure is later to be found. He reinvested the capital into a sugar factory, and with the help of hard work and energy made the new business prosper. But with success came the temptation to consume. Nazim Beg 'rented a large bungalow outside the city, bought himself a motorcar, hired many servants and in the end succumbed to a life of comfort and ease.'[81] His leaving the running of the business to his employees soon began to yield bad results. When checking the account books one day, Nazim Beg found that he was heavily in debt. Failing in his approaches to the bank, the entrepreneur is forced to sell his last remaining *haveli*. It is while the legal formalities are conducted in court, that the children find the hidden treasure and stop the transaction at the last minute. After house and business are sorted out, Hashim and Kazim think they would do the best if they took only a small amount of the money for themselves and saved the rest of the treasure for future emergencies. But the father gives them advice about the true working of

capital: 'It is not a good thing to leave so much money lying around unused' he says, 'it is much better and more appropriate to let this treasure benefit the entire world by investing in some wholesome business activity.'[82]

The main moral of 'Purani Haveli' was that in the age of capitalism doing well was about achievement rather than about political connections. The new times may be less opulent and conspicuous than the past, but that was not necessarily bad. 'Inner' values were now more important than social representation. The status of the old nobility had to be secured by residence in opulent townhouses; the wealth of the industrialist only existed in his hidden account book, no matter how much he tried to project an image of prosperity by owning a car and a large house. But despite all invocations of capitalist commonsense, this rendition of the 'Muslim Punjabi dream' remains somewhat questionable. To begin with, capitalism in this story is not really seen as meritocratic. It is inconceivable that a similar tale could be written in a true rags-to-riches format. Wealth may be made legitimate by hard work and initiative, but in the end it is only *pukka* when backed up by inherited status. Only the *ashraf* class of Muslims could, after all, expect to find a treasure left behind by their wealthy ancestors to save them when the going gets tough. Behind this strange combination of nobility and entrepreneurship stood a larger lie that the author must have been perfectly aware of. Early twentieth-century Punjab had never been a business environment where the greatest danger was negligence or a deceitful bookkeeper. Just as in the old days when one could gain and lose a large landed estate at the blink of an eye, success and failure in colonial capitalism was to a large extent the result of political patronage. The exemplary life story of Lala Harkishan Lal – 'the man who put Punjab on the industrial map but died a pauper'[83] because he fell foul of powerful patronage networks – was all too familiar in Lahore at the time. In the final analysis, Imtiaz Ali Taj's story reveals that the virtues of hard work were an ideal that certain Muslims liked to believe in because it demonstrated that they were successful participants in the game of middle-class self-fashioning; but this endeavour never lost a certain sense of futility and the great pride in a glorious non-capitalist past was not really discarded.

The same point was made in a less artful fashion in an anonymous literary text with strong pedagogic aspirations. The full title was *SHARIF BIWI – the story of poor Sayyida – who advanced from poverty to the highest echelons of wealth by virtue of her education and accomplishment*.[84] The heroine is a young woman, Sayyida by name, who belongs, once again, to a *sharif* but impoverished family. Although much time is spent on specifying the precise and very meagre amounts of money that she has to live on when she marries into an equally impoverished family, there is no question that Sayyida stands way above true poverty. She is well educated and takes part in a middle-class social life, even though she cannot keep up with other women in terms of household furnishings, dress or jewellery. Sayyida shines by virtue of her integrity, modesty and *sharif* pride. It is anathema to her to get into debt in order to indulge in the prevailing fashion for showing off.[85] Her husband, Muhammad Jaᶜfar, is described – somewhat unflatteringly – as

a low-level Government employee with limited abilities whom 'youth had made somewhat fickle and badly disciplined'.[86]

Sayyida understands that her own initiative and her skill at needlework was the only way to drag her household out of this kind of 'poverty'. But she has to first convince those around her. Sayyida begins by politely pointing out to Jaᶜfar that he himself was unable to do anything about their bad situation, and at any rate seemed quite content to waste considerable time on unproductive activities such as playing chess with his friends.[87] All kinds of arguments against women's work are discussed between husband and wife and then dismissed. Over the following pages, a similar dialogue is played out with the mother-in-law who raises more objections, foremost that the employment of a *sharif* woman would give a bad name to the family.[88] With her humble but firm attitude Sayyida wins them over and begins to build up a home-based ladies' tailoring business. The first step is an advertising campaign in which she leaflets the entire city.[89] Then she works overtime – described in every detail and with exact time measurements – and soon has to employ extra hands. From then the success story continues unabated – first the diversification into embroidery, then the purchase of machinery, the opening of a small factory and several retail shops, and finally the acquisition of a trading licence ('agency') for a large textile trading company. In the end Sayyida's income runs in tens of thousands of rupees.

Sayyida's business revenues are described page after page in far greater detail than necessary, but these figures retain an unreal and fantastic quality. Her income not only gets very high far too quickly, it also becomes completely divorced from what really matters in Sayyida's life, that is, how to earn respect as a working woman from the wider public and – both more difficult and more important – from her extended kinship network (*biradari*).[90] Sayyida's ultimate fulfilment stems from her giving birth to a son and her ability to be a patron. She first leases and later gifts parts of the business empire to her father-in-law, father, husband and various others. When she buys a large mansion right at the end of the story, her real joy and pride is to offer employment to dozens of servants – amongst them a *Yunani* practitioner, a doctor, a Western-educated schoolmaster and a *maulana*.[91] There is also a twist in the narrative. At some point in her success story, husband Jaᶜfar suddenly decides that he too has to get his career back on track. He enrols in a High School and finishes his education. Later on he gets a chance to give a Government Collector private tuition in Persian; the colonial officials begins to like Jaᶜfar and sets him up on a career track that is to end with Jaᶜfar himself becoming Deputy Collector.[92] Starting out as a lower-middle-class family based on government employment, the couple advance to becoming a very upper-middle-class family based on government employment. Sayyida's contribution to social mobility acquires its finest achievement in ultimate self-erasure.

As in the previous story about the treasure, the main moral of Sayyida's marvellous career is that hard work and initiative pay off. But this ideal of meritocracy is immediately undermined by various hard realities that the author made no attempt to hide: Sayyida requires prior permission for everything she

does from her in-laws and her husband. Her legitimate ambition is not to become a capitalist but a discrete paternalistic provider for the extended family. Jaᶜfar's meteoric rise, meanwhile, is similarly not of his own making but depends to a very large measure on the goodwill of a colonial official. All this is well observed and represents how things were actually done in North India at the time. The Urdu middle-class milieu found itself in a political economy of patronage, not under conditions of industrial capitalism. North Western India was a region in which the colonial rulers long did not see much potential for industrial growth and did their best to limit the advance of a proper commercial bourgeoisie as much as they could. Particularly in the Punjab – but even in major industrial centres such as Cawnpore in UP – large-scale industry was in the hands of either the state sector or metropolitan capital. Much of what was under the control of an Indian middle class maintained some form of dependence on government. Textile mills and metal workshops benefited from army contracts; publishers survived on printing schoolbooks and stationary; the owners of primitive agricultural industry had to stay in the good books of the land-owning elites and the metropolitan export houses. If certain Hindus and Sikhs had become accepted as entrepreneurs under colonial tutelage, Muslims had even less of a chance to ever establish themselves in business. No matter how much reformist writers were going on about the need for initiative and hard work, they were in reality unable to provide any convincing role models to back up their ideals. The second-order-ideology character of such texts lies in the fact that these authors were not reassuring people that capitalism was really as meritocratic as it claimed to be, but rather that there was something like a capitalist system operating in the first place.

The issue of consumption is only mentioned in passing in both stories – usually in a disapproving manner and directed specifically against conspicuous consumption. This attack was, of course, part and parcel of the prevailing cult of use value that in itself played an important role in the pretence that capitalism could indeed exist in the Urdu middle-class milieu. But an anti-consumerist attitude concealed an important truth about what made the miracle stories of the self-made entrepreneur possible in the first place. Success in business depends crucially on other people's willingness to consume. This is particularly obvious in the case of our *sharif biwi*; if everybody was as unwilling as herself to get into debt and as content to shine with modesty alone, Sayyida would have never got anywhere at all. She needs other people to engage in consumption – even conspicuous consumption – which is borne out in the story by the often very detailed and lavish descriptions of the textiles she produces. Quite fittingly, Sayyida's first act as a businesswoman was an advertising campaign. Consumption, it appears, was nothing less than the undisclosed flipside of the 'Urdu middle-class dream' predicated on austerity.

The very same products that dominated both the advertising landscape and self-fashioning discourse – cosmetics, toiletries and medicines – constituted also one of the few business niches in which Indians could actually at least hope to prosper. Medical consumerism was seen as a quick and miraculous way towards

riches that in many ways replicated the very magic associated with the strength-giving tonics, powders and pills it produced and distributed. There were some notable success stories. The Alembic Chemical Works founded in 1907 in Baroda became one of the foremost pharmaceutical concerns of independent India.[93] Another role model was the acclaimed Bengali scientist P.C. Ray who had established his Bengal Chemicals and Pharmaceutical Works in 1901, the first drug factory completely owned and managed by Indians.[94] The erstwhile soap maker Godrej – prominently advertising in all 1930s newspapers – is today one of the largest and most diversified business houses of India. More modest, but still remarkable, has been the rise of a local bourgeois class in small-town Pakistani Punjab that can again be traced back to medical enterprises set up in the interwar era.[95] Medical production could offer an easy business opportunity because it was unimportant enough not to attract much interest from the colonial government; moreover the making of drugs and toiletries required little capital, while the necessary know-how was easily available. Anybody able to read could simply acquire one of thousands of do-it-yourself manuals. Some practitioners of *Ayurveda* and *Yunani Tibb* published detailed recipes for cures against the most common diseases in the press as well as in penny tracts.[96] Newspapers such as *Weekly Tej* regularly carried information about how to utilize a number of chemical processes for use in the home and in cottage industries, sometimes casually describing the use of dangerous substances such as potassium cyanide.[97] A delightful and representative example for this do-it-yourself culture was the booklet *Mukammal Sabunsazi – priceless recipes for the making of Indian and European-style soap*. The reason for acquiring such a publication is prominently displayed in the upper-left quarter of the title page: a happy middle-class couple overshadowed by literally piles of money; a very succinct representation of Sayyida's dream. The illustrations further down the page range from the technical – the alchemist's mixing bowl, a medical workshop, a piece of soap suspended from a rod – to the enigmatic – a boat at sea, standing in for export potential or international knowledge.

People did indeed buy such tracts to make their living. Statistics published in the press show a substantial amount of imports of a whole range of chemical raw materials needed for the manufacture of drugs and toiletries,[98] much of it no doubt destined for small-scale businesses. Pren Nevile mentions in his memoirs that one of his unemployed cousins was successful in setting up a small soap manufacturing business in Calcutta, simply by using knowledge gained from self-help literature.[99] But the group of people who in all probability benefited the most from the chemical dream were the writers and publishers of self-help literature themselves. They were of course the ultimate middle-class constituency in search of miraculous business success. Like orchids producing beautiful flowers while living on nothing but water and the excrements of bacteria, the publishing sector utilized the leftovers of social decay by trying to make money out of the promise of making money itself. Their repertoire was not confined to chemical and medical matters but covered literally any subject under the sun, including

motorcar maintenance, radio receiving, welding, embroidery work and even film acting.[100] The colonial government often backed some of these publications because they could be portrayed as offering a professional future for the educated unemployed and for demobilized soldiers after the Second World War. One recurring obsession was the art of welding, often glowingly depicted in futuristic iconography.[101] A tract by one Ilmuddin Ahmad entitled *Char Fan* ('Four Arts') covered the unlikely combination of dry cleaning, steam laundry, bleaching and fishing in one booklet.[102] Even more ambitious, an Urdu publication with the Arabic name *Al-Mushtahir* ('The Famous One') was to provide, 'an easy and unsurpassed solution to all difficulties which you may find in this world – all in one book.' The readers could expect nothing less than guidance on how to lead a relaxed life (*aram ki zindagi*), full of success (*kamiyabi*) and free from weakness (*kamzori*).[103]

This was a world in which books became medicines and medicines could be made with the help of books and where even books about medicines were medicines because they dealt with the same disease as the medicines themselves – the listlessness and unease of a middle class that needed to feel sick because it could not otherwise fulfil its aspirations. Similarly, the very fact that technology could bestow riches was advertised and sold as a commodity, while technology itself included advertising as one of its most effective components. This ideological overgrowth of circular references and substitutions has to be seen as an attempt to overcome the relative weakness of consumption that corresponded to the severely limited nature of capitalism under colonial conditions. The Urdu middle-class milieu may have been exposed to some of the grandest global brand names in existence, but by and large consumption was a dance around its own possibilities and promises.

As some form of an ideology of 'the second degree', consumption in the Urdu middle-class milieu cannot be interpreted as one of the ways in which an advanced capitalist society simultaneously stimulates economic growth and conceals the persistence of social inequality from its subjects. In the context of early twentieth-century India and Pakistan, the persistence of established hierarchies was never really to be concealed at all, because they stood right at the surface of the political economy. The patronage politics of interest depended on an open recognition of distinctions and hierarchies. The egalitarian promise of consumption was unable to provide ideological cover for such ground realities. The real function of consumption within the Urdu middle class was one step further removed: it signified the *possibility* of an alternative social order based on middle-class efforts of self-fashioning. For some sections of the middle-class milieu this possibility even entailed a kernel of real opportunity: as publishers, journalists, advertising agents, medical entrepreneurs and soap manufacturers they could at least try to eke out a living outside the controlling framework of patronage. But on the whole, the Urdu middle-class milieu did not believe in the logic of consumption; rather, they *wanted* to believe in it – while at the same time being perfectly aware of the importance of patronage networks for most forms of economic and political advancement.

## A society of 'hollow gentlemen'

The ephemeral nature of consumer society in the Urdu middle-class milieu brings to mind the radical line of reasoning that Baudrillard proposed in *The System of Objects* and in his later work. Contrary to his Marxian stance in *The Consumer Society*, he argued that consumer choice is no mere ideological superstructure of advanced capitalism, but, at a certain stage of historical development, actually *becomes social structure itself*. The system of sign objects, in other words, is all there is to a consumer society. Consumption is a façade that no longer conceals anything but a void. This is why the personalized consumer good has nothing in common with older forms of sign objects. According to Baudrillard,

> Traditional symbolic objects (…) were the mediators of a real relationship or a directly experienced situation, and their substance and form bore the clear imprint of the conscious and unconscious dynamic of that relationship… they remained living objects on account of their inward and transitive orientation with respect to human actions, whether collective or individual.[104]

In other words, because pre-consumerist sign objects were referents of an underlying social reality they had some depth and stability. The consumer object in contrast only stands for itself. Again Baudrillard: '…it is *the idea of the [social] relationship* that is consumed in the series of objects that displays it. The relationship is no longer directly experienced: it has become abstract, been abolished, been transformed into a sign-object, and thus consumed.'[105] In order to maintain surface identities that only exist at the moment of product choice, the modern consumer is forced to engage in a never-ending shopping spree. When no longer relating to branded commodities the societal life of the consumer comes to an end.

All this is strikingly fitting for the kind of consumer society that existed in the Urdu middle-class milieu. It was free-floating and self-referential. There was no real functional connection between a façade of sign objects and the social reality that lay behind it. Consumer goods signified nothing but the possibility of their own existence, and the existence of a class that was in many ways every bit as unreal as the commodities it used for self-definition. But there remains a crucial difference: in Baudrillard's post-modern universe there is no longer any yardstick by which the 'unreality' of consumption can be measured. This is why unreality can become the new reality, and why it takes an Olympian observer like Baudrillard himself to uncover this meta-sociological swindle for the benefit of ordinary readers. In the context of late colonial India, in contrast, there was a very strong yardstick by which the unreality of consumer society could be measured, and that was the social framework of the politics of interest. As most people living at the time were only too painfully aware, there was not much of a possibility to forge new social identities by means of consumption. Most importantly, observers with a vested interest in the continuation of the politics of interest were adamant

at reminding the members of the middle-class milieu of the inherent futility of their desperate attempts at self-fashioning.

Amongst the earliest and most persistent of such critics were the British colonial masters who viewed the consumption endeavours of their Indian subjects with the sarcastic delight of Lucifer contemplating the follies of Man. The colonial regime was both proud about establishing 'meritocracy' in India, and amongst the staunchest critics of any use of sign objects that would have actually supported such a claim. One of the standard lines of colonial legitimacy was the introduction of capitalist frugality to an indigenous society obsessed with conspicuous consumption. Because of their inherent entanglement with caste and other static social structures, Indians were believed to be diametrically opposed to 'the energetic and independent Anglo-Saxon who fresh from the study of McCulloch and Mill, worships at the shrine of unlimited competition.'[106] Colonial officials were eager to document instances of local disapproval to their policies because this demonstrated just how backward and in need of reform Indian society really was. The 1883 District Gazetteer for Lahore, for instance, noted with some satisfaction that popular ballads were bewailing 'that we have impoverished the wealthier classes, discouraged show and display, elevated the lower orders, encouraged women to be independent, and brought high and low under our levelling and complicated rules and regulations.'[107] This was far from the full truth, of course. Colonial rule may have been sometimes dismayed with the consumption of expensive luxury goods, but it was also strongly opposed to the use of sign objects that demarcated social fluidity or upward mobility. Many Indians were actively encouraged to stick to caste- or religion-specific 'uniforms' – most strongly so in the colonial army and police force – because this supported the central tenets of colonial anthropology.[108] India was seen as a mosaic of precisely classifiable and unchanging social identities best represented in photographs, which represented each of these constituencies as anatomical and ethnographic types.[109]

The salaried middle classes, meanwhile, who had done more than anybody else to conform to the social ideals of the new rulers, were usually described with patronizing derision, as in the following example from 1916:

> The middle class clerk has had to watch the standard of living of his equals growing more rapidly than his own income. The effect of this has been that, whereas the style of his dress has perforce improved, the improvement has been at the expense of his lodging and of his food. His growing fastidiousness in the matter of dress is perhaps not so much the outcome of necessity as of a real desire to emulate his superiors, especially in the matter of the European fashions. Consequently he does not aspire to the fine fabrics of the agriculturalist, but does his best to look tidy and up-to-date in machine-made cloth imported from Europe … (…) But neat 'European' clothes he must have, and to got for a walk after office hours dressed like his father or grandfather in a loose

> kurta, kurti and dhoti, would expose him to a fire of ridicule from his fellows which he would not face. Far rather would he be nicknamed by the wealthy tradesman 'a babu with clean clothes and empty pockets.'[110]

The middle-class ability to economize – particularly in terms of interior decorations and food – was no longer seen as a virtue but as a sign of miserliness that led immediately to corporeal deficiency and ill health.[111] The British fully agreed with the wealthy notables and businessmen of Lahore that true social status was based on wealth and a closeness to political power, and that the 'proper' use of sign objects had to be a transparent reflection of such realities.

The false assumption of middle-class lifestyles was the central theme of one of the predominant genres of popular literature of the time. Countless satirical poems – often brought on the market by *muhallah* intellectuals and small publishers – condemned westernizing 'fashions'. In Punjab, the genre was written in both Punjabi and Urdu and gained maximum influence between approximately 1890 and 1930.[112] One representative example, entitled *Ajkal fashion da phuka gentleman* ('The hollow gentleman of today's fashion') was written by one Munshi Muhammad Bakhsh Amritsari in 1922.[113] The subject is an impoverished young man, presumably a college student or somebody who has just got his first job in the clerical sector, struggling to keep up appearances. He rents a flat, which is larger than he can afford, and a bicycle to impress his friends; he spends a fortune on his European clothes and the services of a hair dresser; smokes cigarettes and occasionally gets drunk in one of the new hotels. Because he does not have the means to afford this lifestyle, he has to resort to cheating, which is based on his assumed anglicized habits. When a hotel employee asks him to pay for the food and drink he consumed, he pretends to be somebody else and sends the poor man away calling him a 'damned fool' in English.[114] There is never any money in his pockets, only *chhole* (chickpeas)[115] which is the only kind of food he can really afford. The object of criticism is not so much westernization in itself, but the wrongful appropriation of westernized habits because they were not backed up with the appropriate social standing or financial means. The author of the pamphlet felt that it was ridiculous to construct a social position which one did not possess; westernized habits were presumably alright for the upper classes, large landlords, agro-businessmen and bureaucrats, but not for the offspring of one of the aspiring families who could barely afford to pay for his chickpeas. In other words, what is criticized here is precisely the construction of social identities by means of consumption.

Social satire of this kind was able to de-mask consumption in a much more direct and commonsensical way than Baudrillard's deliberately counter-intuitive critique of a full-blown consumer society. The prevailing political economy of patronage in conjunction with a whole range of other 'traditional' systems of social differentiation made it easy to denounce the appropriation of sign objects as groundless if there was nothing there to back them up. This was in fact so obvious that consumption could still be portrayed as only a step removed from

*conscious deception*. The young gentleman is a fitting subject of ridicule because he believes in his own assumed airs. But he is still something like a conman, and not at all the victim of a cunning and impenetrable ideological formation like the consumer living under advanced capitalist conditions.

This commonsense scepticism towards advertising, commodity culture and all it entailed seemed to have lost some of its power as middle-class attempts at self-fashioning assumed an ever more dominant position in print space. It is clear from assorted *Quarterly Catalogue of Publications* that non-fiction genres in verse suffered a constant and irreversible decline.[116] Urdu mass publishing – now usually in a prose format – offered few replacements for the vivid and highly socially aware *muhalla* journalism of yesteryears. One example would be the aforementioned Haji Laqlaq who delighted millions of listeners and readers with his exploration of a burgeoning film culture. He combined witty criticism with an open fondness for the fruits of modern entertainment. One preferred genre was once again social caricature. In a piece entitled 'Mail received by a film actress' Laqlaq produced a range of mock letters that betray through their peculiar patterns of expression the social airs of a film director, a barrister, a landowner, a college student and a self-styled poet.[117] But the point about these vignettes is already subtly different from a pamphlet like the *Phuka Gentleman*. The source of fun is no longer the 'hollowness' of self-styled identities, but the fact that everybody in society – including middle-class professionals and artists – can be easily caricatured. For many readers this would have been a self-description. Their laughter is a wistful recognition of the efficacy of consumption as they discover that their individual cultivations of lifestyles actually condense into widely recognizable stereotypes.

The difference between satirists Munshi Muhammad Baksh and Haji Laqlaq does not indicate that a consumer society had become more of a 'reality' as the twentieth century progressed. Although the semiotic grid of sign objects undoubtedly became denser and more diversified, there was no question of a new middle-class formation suddenly emerging in the North Indian cities. What had changed, however, was the attitude that educated and middle-income strata had towards the predominant politics of interest. The *muhalla* intellectuals were perfectly happy to play along with patronage; the new middle-class journalists had a desire to pretend that something more open and meritocratic could be put in its place. When we speak about the growth of a consumer society in interwar North India, we are really speaking about the growth of *a will to middle class-ness* that began to take over all aspects of Urdu print culture. This will to be a consumer always remained subject to criticism, however. There were always people around who could denounce the use of consumer sign objects as 'improper'. An increasing determination to become middle class was combined with a persistence of vulnerability. In the final analysis, it was this tension that drove the politics of self-expression. As the final section of this chapter will demonstrate, the increasing radicalization of middle-class activists was an attempt to fortify their self-fashioned identities against persistent criticism; their obsession with displaying sign objects

to an outside gallery was part of a desperate quest to find some form of secure validation for something that under the circumstances of a politics of interest could never be validated.

## The consumption of nationalism

Politics had long been a driving force behind the consumerist use of sign objects. From the late nineteenth century onwards, Indian nationalism had begun to focus on economic issues in order to argue its case for self-determination. The most famous textual reference was Romesh Chandra Dutt's *The Economic History of India* in which he suggested that the enforced import of British manufactured goods had destroyed an indigenous Indian industry and thus created a state of dependency and poverty.[118] These ideas were translated into political action during the Swadeshi Movement at the beginning of the twentieth century that demanded the boycott of foreign-made goods, particularly English-made cloth. Although the aim of such actions was to hurt the colonial power economically while supporting indigenous industry, this was not their only effect. More important was that the creation of choice between different consumer goods became a vehicle to demonstrate true commitment to the nationalist ideal.[119] This encouraged the development of a language of product personalization that sought to exploit political commitment for commercial gain. Wherever possible, imperial products were subjected to competition with self-publicizing *swadeshi* counterparts. The double logic of consumerism – that you always have a choice, and that what you buy is what you are – was thus introduced to the Indian social environment long before advertising discourse and product branding were able to propose a fully developed semiotic identity grid.

A number of advertisers – particularly in a paper like *Weekly Tej* – tried to turn the desire to express support for self-determination into a selling point for a great variety of products. Nationalist personalities from Dr Satyapal, Dr Ansari and Lala Lajpat Rai to Subhas Chandra Bose and Annie Besant were recruited by various manufacturers to publicly endorse their wares.[120] Financial ventures and textile mills, in particular, were often advertised with special reference to their directors and board members who in many cases happened to be prominent political leaders. The trust in the safety of an investment was directly linked to the credibility that a sound nationalist political stance bestowed on an entrepreneur. The acquisition of a consumer sign object was thus doubly justified; it allowed consumers to express their desire to mark out the social status they aspired to, while at the same time making this in itself profoundly selfish act appear as if it was beneficial to a larger collective. This connection was even explicitly recognized in the slogan used by Jagilal Kamalapat Mills, Cawnpur: 'apko bhi faida hoga aur apki mulk bhi' – 'Benefit yourself *and* your country'.[121] Even the most politically quietist of middle-class readers could acquire a good political conscience simply by going shopping.

The same logic of consumer politics was adopted by a wide variety of other political movements and opinions. A noteworthy one was Muslim consumer nationalism (or communalism) that mimicked the original *swadeshi* stance several decades later. As the shops dreamt up by Haji Laqlaq already indicated, the indulgence in a treat – such as mangoes and perfumes – could be legitimized as a statement of collective loyalty to the Muslim community. Long before the Muslim League called for a general boycott of non-Muslim shops in 1946, newspapers included references to 'Islamic' insurances, shipping companies, shops, banks and restaurants, some of which were directly aimed against their non-Muslim competitors. In 1936 the Muslim India Insurance Company, Lahore, which stood in direct competition with the upcoming insurance companies rightly or wrongly associated with Hindu entrepreneurs, made it known to readers that 'Every discerning Muslim must prefer this company to a non-Muslim one'.[122] A shop in Kashmiri Bazaar, a predominantly Muslim area, exhorted its customers: 'Always buy from the shops of your Islamic brethren, not from their Sikh competitors!'[123]

Consumer nationalism was an easy way to dress up the middle-class desire to consume as a service to the nation; but it was also a form of political identity that – like the products it was based on – would invite constant scrutiny and suspicion. Many *swadeshi* products were not qualitatively different from their imported counterparts, and their *swadeshi*-ness hence not immediately visible. The following example may illustrate this. A full-page advertisement for Godrej Sandal Soap – published in the Lahore commercial Muslim daily *Paisa Akhbar* – claimed nationalist credibility by virtue of the *ingredients* from which the soap was made. Unlike other soaps – the advertisement claimed – Godrej only contained vegetable oils of *swadeshi* origin, and no factory-made glycerine imported from outside India.[124] The nationalism of soap in this case did not lie in its use value or indeed any other visible characteristic, but was somehow inherent to material being itself. The idea that Godrej was quite literally nationalist 'to the core' was designed to invoke utmost solidity, but due to the invisibility of such qualities there was ample opportunity for insinuation and denunciation. The Godrej advert itself suggested that other manufacturers also professed to produce *swadeshi* soap, but that their claims were a lie; the nationalist commitment of their products was in reality debased by the secret admixture of illicit animal fats. Similar suspicions could be raised elsewhere. Japanese cloth was found to be labelled as 'Indian made'.[125] Even more confusingly, both Lipton Tea and Hindustani Chai were produced in India under colonial tutelage, but one was adorned with an 'imperial' product identity, the other with a 'national' one.

The kind of nationalist identity that the choice of sign objects bestowed on their consumers was riddled by the same contradiction that undercut the nationalist credentials of a product like Godrej Soap. On the one hand, there was the suggestion of a profound expression of authenticity. As the advertising specialist Moorhouse pointed out so eloquently, advertising works because it brings a product in connection with people's innermost desires and identities. Only those who were truly nationalist at heart would hence opt for a product with a nationalist product

identity. But as the relationship between such products and actual political action was tenuous at best, one could never be quite sure whether the nationalism expressed by product choices was free from political impurities. What if the revelatory magic of advertising was in fact a black magic? Was it not its cardinal feature to lie, to dress up the inferior as the superior? This strange combination of assumed solidity and persistent instability was inherent to the nature of the consumer sign object in general. In a consumer society identities are created with reference to a self-referential and free-floating semiotic grid. Because there is no social structure to ground identities in, consumer choice alone must bear the burden of profundity – an obligation that consumption can only meet if it does not give the consumers pause for thought, but continually propels them on to make more and more consumer choices.

The fundamental insecurity of political consumer identities was already recognized by contemporary observers, some operating from within a politics of self-expression and others from outside it. A particularly perceptive example of the former was the feminist and socialist activist Ismat Chughtai. Consider the following observations about different social types joining in 'progressive' politics, which she wove into the plot of her brilliant and semi-autobiographical novel *The Crooked Line*:

> Every man whose hair was awry, whose eyes flashed, whose clothes were a trifle unusual and somewhat shabby, who sported a briefcase containing some passionate verses and burning stories, spirited articles and fine photographs, a few simple memories and charming letters, was a progressive. He became thoughtful suddenly in the course of a conversation, he talked to women very freely and somewhat carelessly and roughly, mentioned love the first chance he had.[126]
>
> There can be another branch of progressives as well. Those unfortunate ones who have been forced to inherit substantial estates, who have failed in all elections and selections despite reliable endorsement, who don't know what to do, how to pass their time. They are obliged to live in their ancestral palaces, use high-quality furniture, attend important official and non-official meetings for which they have to forgo their national dress and don suits stitched by western tailors, they are forced to sit in grand drawing rooms, drink tea in teacups imported from Italy… (…)[127]

In all these descriptions, Chughtai displayed an unfailing awareness of the consumerist nature of contemporary leftwing politics; it was all about relating to the 'right' sign objects – shabby clothes, khaddar, literature – while avoiding to be seen with the 'wrong ones' – Western suits and Italian tea cups. Despite Chughtai's sarcasm, however, it is entirely believable that each of these characters was honest about his need to communicate an innermost revolutionary identity, and that they were deeply distraught by the fact that various societal impositions

constantly undermined their endeavour. In the case of the first character – a progressive poet loosely modelled on Faiz Ahmad Faiz whom Chughtai knew and disliked – every aspect of corporeal appearance, every mannerism – his flashy eyes, the unkempt hair, the forceful voice – had been remodelled in order to further solidify the sign-exchange value of his clothes and accessories. In order to convey the depth of his revolutionary passion, this character had become a veritable sign object in its own right, while all at the same time becoming completely inactive in terms of conventional politics.

Gandhian politics was another field that offered middle-class men and women an opportunity to develop conspicuous ways of communicating their inner political orientation through the use of political sign objects. In the eyes of Chughtai, the essence of Congress philosophy was basically a change in shopping habits. The middle-class women in her novel understand the message of the Mahatma as follows: 'It is said Gandhiji will give everybody a spinning wheel and a goat and say, "Go and spin yarn and drink goat's milk." *No tea, or chocolate or biscuits*!'[128] The exhortation to wear only Indian-style garments made from homespun cloth (*khaddar*) – and for men to don a 'Gandhi cap' – placed a fashion statement at the heart of political action, no matter how austere and 'un-fashionable' this statement may have appeared.

One may be mistaken to interpret the new dress code as some kind of 'political uniform', but this would be to miss the crucial difference between a consumer sign object and a traditional sign object in Baudrillard's sense. Uniforms belong to the latter category, whereas *khaddar* was exemplary for the former. Uniforms have an exceptionally clear relationship with what they stand for. It is their very raison d'etre to demarcate specific social functions, public offices or political ranks. The false assumption of a uniform is an easily verifiable criminal offence; one is either a police officer or one is not. Uniforms, moreover, only exist in juxtaposition to mufti; they are to be taken off when the bearer leaves the role that the uniform signifies. *Khaddar* in contrast was never to be taken off, so to speak; it did not communicate a specific role or function but a comprehensive inner orientation. The adoption of homespun garments was meant to signify everything, but as far as suspicious observers were concerned it could equally well signify nothing. Everyone could pose as a Gandhian by wearing *khaddar* as some form of masquerade. A perfectly self-aware example was Khalid Latif Gauba – scion of an elite Hindu family of Lahore who recalled the following episode from the mid-1930s:

> I suddenly decided that I should follow Mahatmaji in letter and spirit. So I decided to wear Khaddar, wear a dhoti [wrap-around garment] and also to do some spinning. (…) [But on a shopping trip, when] I got out of the car, my dhoti got caught in the handle … and in a few moments I was like Adam meeting Eve, to the great amusement of all the people of the commercial buildings and the shoppers, so I said 'To hell with Gandhi' (…) and I promptly gave up Khaddar, Gandhi and the spinning wheel and became a anti-Gandhi-ite after that.[129]

This little anecdote is not only amusing and mildly self-deprecating, but it also signals that Gauba had an honest understanding of the logic of consumption politics. He knew that the door handle of his luxury car was literally more revealing of his true self than the *khaddar* garment that he only put on to make a half-hearted political statement. The reason why he told this story in the first place was that he suspected other Punjabi middle-class men and women of being somewhat less than honest about their own commitments to Gandhi. Gauba loved to play the querulous cynic who could easily see through the pretences of others. This may have been partly due to individual temperament, but was also a marker of class: Gauba was from a very upper-middle-class family who had literally seen it all; spectacular riches, political power, bankruptcy, corruption, even religious conversion for non-religious motives. The conscious adoption of a political stance as a role rather than as reflection of some inherent being, was always perfectly acceptable to those who believed that their own social superiority was completely above question. Despite his openly acknowledged love for his car and a good shopping trip, Gauba was neither a consumer in Baudrillard's sense, nor middle-class in any strong sense of the term. As an old-fashioned dandy, Gauba could always maintain some sense of ironic distance from the world of goods he so clearly enjoyed.[130]

The question of authenticity and inauthenticity was never a problem for the participants in the politics of interest. Their material interests were solid and practical, and their membership in one of the patronage networks identified by colonial social science beyond question. The men of interest were 'men of substance', not 'hollow gentlemen' as satirized by popular commentators. For self-expressionist activists, in contrast, the politics of consumption was the source of a never-ending process of introspection and radicalization. Ismat Chughtai's derogatory comments about the upper-middle-class lifestyles of her communist comrades was a typical instance of denunciation that was bound to lead its targets deeper into an obsession with sign objects, rather than towards a more effective understanding of political action. The basic assumption was that the persistent use of the wrong kind of consumer goods in daily life was bound to contaminate whatever political stance these activists otherwise took. The obvious middle-class answer to such an accusation was not a radicalization of political thinking, but a drive to make sign objects more commensurate with what they believed to be their innermost ideological commitments. This is precisely the logic behind the politics of 'de-classing' that has been described in some detail in Chapter 2. Within the self-expressionist political universe, legitimate action could not even begin before political identity had been established with essentialist certainty. In a consumer society this was impossible, however. Without any roots in immediate social relationships, the construction of identities with the help of sign objects always had to remain hollow. This void could not be filled, but it could be hidden behind a veneer of frantic political activity that was not really political in the conventional sense of the term. Politics was no longer about managing social relationships, but became restricted to the identification and consumption of more

and more sign objects. The politics of naming described right at the beginning of this chapter was perhaps the most visible symptom of this new orientation. 'Pakistan' as a middle-class political demand was the commoditization and consumption of the need to find a constitutional solution to the grand imperial numbers game of majority and minority. Jinnah revealed an essential truth when he referred to Pakistan the 'your talisman' in a speech to his followers.[131] Savarkar's 'Hindutva' was the rendition into a sign object of an intricate set of religious traditions and practices. The state proposed in the *Khilafat-e-Pakistan Scheme* was not really a state as a political institution, but a consumer object through which activists could generate some surrogate form of authenticity for themselves.

The connection between their politics of self-expression and the logic of consumption was immediate. Consumption itself is first and foremost an act of self-expression: by choosing one product over the other, I show to the world who I am. Indeed, within the logic of a consumer society this is the *only* meaningful social act there is. Self-expressionist politics similarly assumed that the only politically meaningful act was the expression of some form of inner essence in order to have its power and authenticity verified by some outside audience. Like the social logic of consumption more generally, self-expressionism was riddled by constant self-doubt; hence the never-ending need to subject body and soul to extreme situations, so that their true inner nature may be safeguarded and revealed. The branding and consumption of the individual body was perhaps the ultimate consequence of the quest for sign objects that communicated one's innermost identity. The need to stay lean and clean in order to demonstrate one's determination to be middle class was a mild and commonplace form of body consumption; a much more extreme and almost literal form of branding was achieved by the scars left by the Khaksar whiplash or the burn wounds inflicted during experiments with self-torture. Although some vague justification – a preparation for the travails of the future – was often stated for such practices, the politics of consumption was a politics that had no goals beyond the act of branding itself. Political action had become a consumable and was duly consumed.

## Conclusion

The politics of self-expression was the continuation of middle-class consumption by other means. As Baudrillard has argued when explaining the miracle of 'GARAP', the ultimate meaning of commodity sign objects is the possibility of a consumer society itself. The fact that people can respond to empty ciphers in a positive way proves that they are accustomed to seeing the world as a semiotic grid where everything has the sole purpose of communicating and constructing social identities. When members of the Urdu middle-class milieu engaged in an obsessive quest for political ciphers, they were trying to prove the same point: that there was indeed something like a consumer society in operation in the context of late colonial India.

The consumer society thus invoked was different from the consumer society described by Baudrillard, however. It may have been as much of a façade without social depth as the system of sign objects in the metropolitan context, but there the similarity ends. Indian middle-class consumer society did not conceal a social void; it existed in open *contradiction* to a powerful political economy of favour that possessed a very different ideological superstructure altogether. Consumer identities were still 'empty' and disconnected from concrete societal relations, but this did not pose a problem to society as a whole, only to those who chose to participate in the game of consumer politics in the first place. The constituency in question was none other than the middle-class milieu in search of an alternative to the prevailing politics of interest; the latter may have given them secure identities, but not of the kind they found politically useful or satisfying. In invoking the possibility of a consumer society through their obsession with sign objects, the politically conscious sections of the Urdu middle-class milieu were really invoking the possibility of their existence as a class. Consumer society and the middle class were, in fact, one and the same entity. The grid of sign objects that was constituted through the advertising of branded consumer goods was relatively extensive and covered different social attitudes such as religious and 'westernized', technology obsessed or traditional; but thanks to an all-pervasive cult of surrogate use value, all these choices ultimately boiled down to a typical middle-class ethic of self-control and hard work.

The politics of consumption was directly implicated in the general anti-societal orientation that defined the politics in particular and the self-consciousness of the middle class in general. The logic of consumption changed the remit of politics from *actual* societal relations to relationships with sign objects that in some form or other encapsulated the *idea* of social relationships. Putting Freud's thoughts on the matter to new use, this transposition could be described as a case of 'fetishism' – a term that has been used frequently throughout this book. An original desire – the need to establish the possibility for a middle-class political consciousness – was suppressed, and in the process transmuted into the desire for material objects.[132] The important point here is that the new relationship between fetish and desiring subject completely obscures the original desire and thus makes any direct possibility of its satisfaction impossible. The excess energy is channelled into an often fanatical and obsessive veneration of the fetish that goes far beyond its actual use or even sign value.

As described over the course of this book, the politicians of self-expression got obsessed with a whole range of fetishes: toiletry items, foods, miracle medicines, military uniforms, maps, technological innovations, offensive literature, one's own body, even political slogans and brand names such as 'Hindutva' or 'Pakistan'. In all these instances, the middle class lusted after material incarnations of their own conditions of existence. Each of these instances represented something the middle class saw not only as the justification for an independent political consciousness, but even for a wider claim to political hegemony: knowledge and education, a familiarity with the ways of the world, self-control

and hard work, cleanliness and a commitment to total authenticity. In reality, of course, none of these qualities was capable of securing the middle class real access to political power. Virtues such as hard work and technical expertise brought no more than advancement into intermediate positions within a wider political economy of favour. It was the never openly acknowledged realization of this failure that led the middle-class milieu into the politics of fetishism. But by suppressing the material foundations of their own existence in favour of a politics of self-expression, the middle-class milieu locked itself into a vicious circle of self-consumption that was more than ever removed from the possibility of an alternative politics.

# CONCLUSION

The politics of self-expression was a political culture that expressed the inability of a colonial middle-class constituency to develop a secure political identity of its own. In the first instance, this failure can be explained with reference to the political economy instituted by the colonial regime. The Cambridge School of South Asian historiography has already prepared the ground for such an argument: the British never recognized class as a key political identity, only a politics of interest based on intermediaries and patronage networks. The members of the Urdu middle-class milieu were simultaneously bound by such structures and developed a desire to overcome them. This contradiction could not be directly resolved. In consequence, middle-class political activists embarked on an ideological outflanking manoeuvre. They developed a new form of politics – the politics of self-expression – in which troublesome questions about the nature of social and economic relationships were no longer visible or permissible.

Once this baseline argument was established, this book has moved far beyond the parameters of colonial politics and gone on to situate the politics of self-expression within a global framework of explanation. The search for the socio-cultural foundations of self-expressionist politics has led us into the realm of middle-class material culture and from then on into the problematic of a consumer society. This move was prompted by the striking prevalence in Urdu middle-class life of two sets of cultural phenomena that had little or nothing to do with the specific context of late colonial India: the widespread reception and appropriation of political ideas from European fascism and the emergence of a global language of advertising. The basic conclusion of this book is that these two phenomena were in fact causally interrelated. The politics of self-expression was the result of a logic of consumption taking over the realm of politics.

This argument implies that the problem of middle-class politics can never be fully understood within the standard conceptual reference frame used by most political historians of South Asia. Although there remained some important cross connections, self-expressionism was a political culture that operated on entirely different assumptions and for entirely different objectives from a politics of interest or a politics of nationalism. Although the politics of self-expression often used a political language that emphasized the importance of the ‘nation’ or the

religious 'community', it was in reality neither particularly nationalist, and not at all 'communitarian'. Collective identities were invoked for the sole purpose of giving a quest for personal salvation some form of meta-historical grounding. By assuming a direct correspondence between a collective soul and the souls of individual activists, the latter could translate their inner struggles into something that was recognizably 'political' by the standards of a newspaper-reading middle-class culture. The short-circuiting of inner struggles and global developments bypassed the entire logical space in which all other forms of politics are constituted: the societal web of relationships *between* people as social beings. In consequence, the politics of self-expression had little interest in – and often a positive aversion to – the kind of issues that concerned 'mainstream' nationalists and community leaders. Self-expressionists openly decried the importance of even the most basic societal bonds such as the family in favour of an untrammeled individualism, dressed up as self-sacrifice to the cause of collective salvation. Their often very militant invocation of religion was denuded of communitarian rituals and of any sense of social ethics.The importance of a 'public sphere' – the cultivation of an open debating culture that demonstrated an international standard of political maturity – was similarly rejected, and there was no place at all for concepts such as democracy or citizenship.

The most important difference between the politics of self-expression and a politics of nationalism was the former's inherent open-endedness. The predominant tendency in the literature to rationalize certain features of self-expressionism as staging posts towards national liberation, or even more implausibly as an ideological cover for a project of 'middle-class hegemony', violates the conceptual autonomy of its subject and fails to account for its innermost character. The ultimate aim of self-expressionism was never a return to societal politics, but a flight into an alternative ideological universe where all societal constraints that plagued the middle-class self would cease to exist, and where the activist could reach a state of ecstasy and intoxication that marked the end of his or her existence as a socially networked person. It was this aim that made the fascistic cult of boundary experiences of violence and war so attractive to the prophets of self-expression. If society and a societal politics of interest are in themselves seen as the enemy, then the most momentous event in conventional political historiography – the shift from a colonial to a post-colonial regime – does not constitute a lasting achievement. As was so strikingly the case in Pakistan between 1947 and 1953, the post-colonial state was almost immediately after its creation placed in the role of a new bogeymen; self-expressionist activists simply redefined the nature of their agitation and shifted the goalpost of what true liberation meant.

The fundamental link between consumption and politics is crucial to understanding the never-ending dynamics of the politics of self-expression. The open-ended – one may say 'consumptive' – character of politics was directly related to the fact that middle-class socio-cultural identities came to possess a very similar character of perpetual unfinishedness. Drawing on Jean Baudrillard's work, a consumer society has been defined as one in which there is no societal

reality other than the relationship between consumers and branded commodity sign objects. People are entirely what they consume; no immediate relationships of political power, economic exchange or cultural capital matter any more. This book did not advocate the unproblematic transposition of such metropolitan theoretical models to the world of the Urdu middle-class milieu. A great part of the last chapter was, in fact, spent on the question to what extent a society still dominated by patronage networks could ever be a 'consumer society'. But in the end, such complications do not matter for the overall argument. There is no doubt that the middle-class milieu was, by virtue of its material culture, persuaded to use consumption as an outlet for its frustrated socio-political ambitions. The fact that consumer identities have something 'hollow' about them, that they substitute a fetishistic relationship with consumer goods for 'real' societal relations, was precisely what made them so attractive. A constituency that could not otherwise exist as a class due to the constraints imposed by the political economy of favour, found in consumption a space where it could establish some form of a unified cultural consciousness.

Despite their ideological advantages, such 'hollow' consumer identities also posed major problems for the middle class' sense of rootedness and authenticity. The trouble with consumer identities is that they suggest great identity depth – goods are believed to reflect a person's innermost being – but at the same time rely on the garish and the mundane to produce identities. Consumption is not about great deeds in world history, but about the choice of toothpaste and cigarettes. Moreover, even the most ardent participant in a consumer society is perfectly aware of the fact that advertising is ultimately a game of deception. The politics of self-expression was an attempt to make consumer identities secure and 'serious' by dressing up consumption activity as politics. Political action revolved to a remarkable degree around the appropriation of sign objects; whether one was a Gandhian, a Jinnah-ite or a 'revolutionary', political loyalty had to be expressed through the right consumer choice. It mattered in politics what type of hat one wore, what soap one bought and whether one allowed oneself to snack on biscuits and tea. At the same time, branding also invaded the way in which the already denuded demands of the politics of self-expression were presented to the public; there was a proliferation of fancy acronyms, neologism as well as archaisms – all designed to turn political goals and political institutions into consumables. The language of politics became a caricature of advertising language; it retained all the hyperbole – talk of 'total' liberation, 'total' extermination, of providence and the 'stern law of history' – while replacing advertising's playfulness and self-irony with the certainty of assumed prophetic airs.

In the final analysis, the invasion of politics by consumption during the heydays of the politics of self-expression in the 1930s and 1940s can be explained as a middle-class effort to come to terms with the insecurity of a new and not as yet normalized consumer society within the late colonial context. Self-expressionism appeared on the scene only a few decades after commodity branding and advertising had made their entry into middle-class life, and there is ample evidence that

many aspects of everyday culture still remained outside the reach of a consumer society. One must not forget that the educated and moderately well off city dweller in a place like Lahore or Delhi was never only a consumer, but also a junior member of some form of patronage politics. The 'hollowness' of consumption was therefore never far from the surface, and its fortification with political gravitas imperative to giving it any secure meaning at all. The shift into politics was facilitated by the global climate of fascism and the presence of a nationalist mass movement in India itself. Both underlined the existential importance of politics for life, and supplied the ideological nourishment and opportunities for action that the troubled middle-class identity seekers could use to construct a less ephemeral place in the world.

Within the larger story of the consumption of politics, the politics of self-expression as described in this book was no more than a first episode. The open-ended, goal-less nature of the politics of self-expression meant that it would never simply go away. What pushed the politics of self-expression temporarily underground in the early 1950s was a combination of generational change, limited socio-economic restructuring and state repression. But even when temporarily suppressed, the politics of self-expression continued to fester in middle-class political culture, waiting for new opportunities to regain a high degree of visibility and mainstream relevance. The narrative continues, in a still open-ended form, into the present, where a consumer society has made further inroads into social structures around the globe and is busily 'consuming' more and more areas of social, political and cultural life. It is therefore appropriate to end this book with a few sketches of possible lines of connection that make the political culture of late colonial self-expressionism relevant for our understanding of India and Pakistan's present.

In India, the first phase of self-expressionist politics ended with the large-scale relocation of major segments of the Urdu-using Hindu middle classes. Many of them settled in the Delhi area to rebuild their lives under the new Nehruvian regime. Self-expressionist activity in general did not cease overnight; Savarkar's disciples remained active and attempted to revive the Ayodhya temple/mosque controversy in order to challenge the new nationalist state. In Punjab, the pre-Partition agitation against Muslim nationalism tipped almost immediately into new demands for an ethnic Punjabi Sikh state.[1] But the Nehruvian state was by and large remarkably successful in absorbing these pressures. It was also ideologically committed to arrest or even roll back the further development of a middle-class consumer society. Political episodes with self-expressionist undertones nevertheless re-appeared between the middle of the 1960s and Indira Gandhi's 'emergency' in the mid-1970s. One example with some relevance for Eastern Punjab was the radicalization of leftwing politics in India during this time period. As the mainstream Communist Parties moved more and more towards a 'politics of interest' mode of operating, young middle-class activists – often inspired by events in China and the student rebellion in the West – adopted more and more radical forms of leftwing politics that sometimes replaced their potential

for socio-economic emancipation by projects of individual self-liberation. Much more significant for the grand narrative of consumption politics, however, was the return of hard-line Hindu nationalism in the late 1980s and early 1990s. There was a clear ideological continuity to the original politics of self-expression of the 1930s and 1940s. Once again activists engaged in frenzied mass meetings, politics of ritual humiliation of perceived enemies and paramilitary activity. The connection between the political rise of the BJP/RSS combine and the development of consumption appears immediate. As many commentators have noted, it was often the new middle-class sections that benefited directly from a new economic policy espousing global consumerism that stood at the forefront of the movement.[2]

Developments in Pakistan took a somewhat different ideological flavour, but followed a roughly similar pattern. The first wave of self-expressionist politics was to a large extent suppressed by the emerging martial state in the early 1950s. Many of the young student activists involved in the Pakistan movement felt deep disappointment at the return of the politics of interest after years of heady political activism, but they also got jobs and started families. Others ended up in prison, or channelled their energies into new religious and ethnic liberation struggles. A full-scale resurgence of the politics of self-expression occurred in the late 1960s when the newly formed Pakistan People's Party challenged the position of General Ayub Khan's military regime. As was the case in the 1930s and 1940s there were strong and direct links to events elsewhere in the world, at that moment no longer dominated by fascism, however, but by a leftwing student rebellion. The ideological orientation of the PPP was a mixture of old-fashioned Islamo-fascism – Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto's promise of a 'thousand years of war with India' was not very different from the pronouncements of Mashriqi or the *Khilafat-e-Pakistan Scheme* – and the kind of self-expressionist left-wingism then globally *en vogue*. The group of people that carried the PPP agitation forward consisted of erstwhile self-expressionist student activists from the 1940s, now in middle age, and younger members of a middle-class constituency who had expanded during the time of economic prosperity of the early 1960s. As was the case in the first period of self-expressionism, the new political culture was pushed underground by a combination of cooption and coercion. Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto himself initiated the process when he turned away from the ideological politics of the PPP in the mid-1970s, and returned to a politics of interest based on landlord power. The job was finished by General Zia ul-Haq who suppressed any form of middle-class political activism – including the kind of Islamicist radicalism he favoured for some time – by the time of his death in 1988.

The second wave of self-expressionist political activity in Pakistan as elsewhere in the Muslim world began in the aftermath of the Afghan War and continues until today. It has taken the ideological form of what Oliver Roy has designated as 'neo-fundamentalism' and other, less astute, observers call 'Jihadism'.[3] The difference between this and more established forms of Islamic radicalism is precisely what demarcated the mid-twentieth-century politics of self-expressionism

from mainstream nationalism. The new Islamic activists have lost interest in the societal – they are no longer primarily concerned with project of creating an Islamic society based on the *shari*$^{c}$*at* – and concentrate on matters of self-fulfilment and meta-historical statements of identity. Engagement in a global war against the infidel enemy is expected to fill a sense of emotional void. The methodology by which this war is to be conducted is a direct reflection of the logic of a consumer society. Activists seek to create spectacles – beamed around the world by the new media universe – in which they turn themselves into political brands that are immediately and often quite literally 'consumed'. The suicide mission is the ultimate extension of the old self-expressionist longing for self-annihilation and intoxication, a self-indulgent form of 'political' activity that is ostensibly based on supreme sacrifice, but in reality gives the person involved a taste of the ultimate power trip.[4] Unsurprisingly, the core constituency of the new Islamic radicalism is not the kind of conservative underclass usually associated with more legalistic forms of Islamic radicalism, but a globalized constituency of young middle-class activists whose identities have been formed by living under advanced capitalist conditions.[5]

If there is a final conclusion to be drawn from this exposition of the politics of self-expressionism in twentieth-century India and Pakistan, it has to be the following: the development of a middle class through an expansion of the social role of consumption offers no guarantee for a better political culture. Persistent contradictions between a consumer society and other forms of societal organization will stimulate forms of self-expressionist radicalism that may be very hard to control. Far from being the historical carrier of the voice of reason and modernity, the consumer middle class could well turn out as the destroyer of the world that gave birth to it.

# NOTES

## INTRODUCTION

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## 2 STATES OF POWER

1 Punjabi manuscript, the author's private collection. I am deeply grateful to Sheila Bhatia for making some of the songs and poems from her organizing days in the 1940s Communist Party available to me. She not only made hand-written copies of her old notes for me to keep, but also translated and performed this poem/song for me. New Delhi, 19 March 1999.

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37 A good example for such a direct combination can be found in the anthropology section of the Calcutta Museum. There is a map of India with all major regions linked by string to little pictures of a man and woman in corresponding local dress. 'Tribal' examples are illustrated in three-dimensional life-size installations.
38 An article by one Pandit Taravat B.A., L.L.B, running in several instalments over several issues of *Wīklī Tēj* developed the theme of India as 'tamaddun kā pahlā gahwārah' ('the craddle of civilization') 6 May, p. 34, 13 May, p. 6, 10 June 1935, p. 15.
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40 *Āryah Musāfir*, October 1899, November 1899, pp. 35–6.
41 *Āryah Musāfir*, April 1899, p. 23.
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43 Letter Diwan Chaman Lal to Acharya Ram 11 November 1938, quoted in NAI: File (Home Political) 28/18/38, Passport Dewan Chaman Lal. Activities of Chaman Lal, author of the prohibited book 'The Vanishing Empire'.
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53 NAI: File (Home Political) 22/13/37, Question in the Legislative Assembly by Mr. Asaf Ali and Sir Muhammad Yaqub regarding the importance of air warfare. OIOC: L/P&J/5/239, Fortnightly Report for Punjab, First Half of May 1938.
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55 AFM: Vol. 138 Punjab Provincial Muslim League 1941–2, Sayyid Khalilurrahman (General Secretary of Punjab ML) to Sir Sikandar Hayat Khan, Lahore, 22 October 1942, p. 100.
56 According to 'secret information' obtained from inner Muslim League circles and leaked to the Congress by one Habiburrahman. Teen Murti: AICC File G-36, 'Communal Problems', 1946.
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81 A good example is the family of Fakir Mughisuddin, a retired army officer whose forefathers Nuruddin, Azizuddin, and Imamuddin were influential notables at the court of Ranjit Singh. Anand, *Lahore*, pp. 128–134.
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89 The cheapest bicycle (of Japanese make) cost Rs. 19 in 1935. Ibid., p. 160.
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## 5 THE CONSUMPTION OF POLITICS

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## CONCLUSION

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